



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

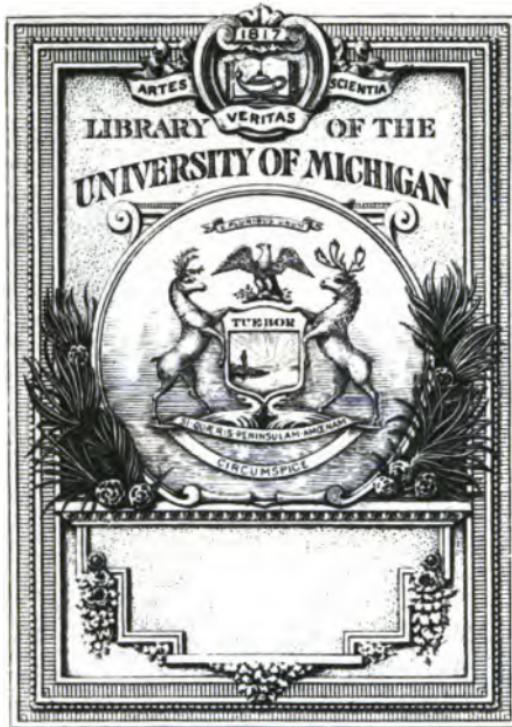
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A 1,029,450



839.78  
591.72  
2.475

56







# THE GROWTH OF A SOUL



# THE GROWTH OF A SOUL

BY

AUGUST STRINDBERG

AUTHOR OF "THE INFERNO," "THE SON OF A SERVANT," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

**CLAUD FIELD**

NEW YORK  
**McBRIDE, NAST & COMPANY**  
1914

*[Printed in England]*

## CONTENTS

CHAP.		1867	PAGE
I	IN THE FORECOURT		1
II	BELOW AND ABOVE		24
III	THE DOCTOR	1868	65
IV	IN FRONT OF THE CURTAIN	1869	83
V	JOHN BECOMES AN ARISTOCRAT	1869	97
VI	BEHIND THE CURTAIN	1869	109
VII	JOHN BECOMES AN AUTHOR		120
VIII	THE "RUNA" CLUB		128
IX	BOOKS AND THE STAGE		154
X	TORN TO PIECES		162
XI	IDEALISM AND REALISM		178
XII	A KING'S PROTÉGÉ		183
XIII	THE WINDING UP		195
XIV	AMONG THE MALCONTENTS		204
XV	THE RED ROOM		219



# THE GROWTH OF A SOUL

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE FORECOURT

(1867)

THE steamer had passed Flottsund and Domstyrken and the university buildings of Upsala began to appear. "Now begins the real stone-throwing!" exclaimed one of his companions,—an expression borrowed from the street-riots of 1864. The hilarity induced by punch and breakfast abated; one felt that things were now serious and that the battle of life was beginning. No vows of perpetual friendship were made, no promises of helping each other. The young men had awakened from their romantic dreams; they knew that they would part at the gang-way, new interests would scatter the company which the school-room had united; competition would break the bonds which had united them and all else would be forgotten. The "real stone-throwing" was about to begin.

John and his friend Fritz hired a room in the Klostergränden. It contained two beds, two tables, two chairs and a cupboard. The rent was 30 kronas<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A krona = 1s. 2d.

a term,—15 kronas each. Their midday meal was brought by the servant for 12 kronas a month,—6 kronas each. For breakfast and supper they had a glass of milk and some bread and butter. That was all. They bought wood in the market,—a small bundle for 4 kronas. John had also received a bottle of petroleum from home as a present, and he could send his washing to Stockholm. He had 80 kronas in his table-drawer with which to meet all the expenses of the term.

It was a new and peculiar society into which he now entered, quite unlike any other. It had privileges like the old house of peers and a jurisdiction of its own ; but it was a “little Pedlington” and reeked of rusticity. All the professors were country-born ; not a single one hailed from Stockholm. The houses and streets were like those of Nyköping. And it was here that the head-quarters of culture had been placed, owing to an inconsistency of the government which certainly regarded Stockholm as answering to that description.

The students were regarded as the upper class in the town and the citizens were stigmatised by the contemptuous epithet of “Philistines.” The students were outside and above the civic law. To smash windows, break down fences, tussle with the police, disturb the peace of the streets,—all was allowed to them and went unpunished ; at most they received a reprimand, for the old lock-up in the castle was no more used. For their militia-service they had a special uniform of their own which carried privileges with it. Thus they were

systematically educated as aristocrats, a new order of nobility after the fall of the house of peers.

What would have been a crime in a citizen was a "practical joke" in a student. Just at this time the students' spirits were at a high pitch, as a band of student-singers had gone to Paris, had been successful there, and were acclaimed as conquerors on their return.

John now wished to work for his degree but did not possess a single book. "During the first term one must take one's bearings" was the saying. John went to the student's club. The constitution of the club was antiquated,—so much so that the annexed provinces Skåne, Halland and Blekinge were not represented in it. It was well arranged and divided into classes, not according to merit, but according to age and certain dubious qualities. In the list the title "nobilis" still stood after the names of those of high birth. There were several ways of gaining influence in the club, through an aristocratic name, family influence, money, talent, pluck and adaptability, but the last quality by itself was not enough among these intelligent and sceptical youths. On the first evening in the club John made his observations. There were several of his old companions from the Clara School present, but he avoided them as much as possible and they him. He had deserted them and gone by a short cut through the private school, while they had tramped along the regular course through the state school. They all seemed to him somewhat conventional and stunted. Fritz plunged among the

aristocrats and obtained introductions, made acquaintances easily and got on well.

As they went home in the evening John asked him who was the "snob" in the velvet jacket with stirrups painted on his collar. Fritz answered that he was not a snob, and that it was as stupid to judge people by fine clothes as by poor ones. John with his democratic ideas did not understand this and stuck to his opinion. Fritz asserted that the youth referred to was a very fine fellow and the senior in the club, and in order to rouse John further, added that he had expressed himself satisfied with the newcomers' appearance and manners; he was reported to have said "they had an air about them; formerly the fellows from Stockholm when they came there, looked like workmen."

John was ruffled at this information and felt that something had come in between him and his friend. Fritz's father had been a miller's servant, but his mother had been of noble birth. He had inherited from his mother what John had from his.

The days passed on. Fritz put on his frock coat every morning and went to pay his respects to the professors. He intended to be a jurist; that was a proper career, for lawyers were the only ones who obtained real knowledge which was of use in public life, who tried to obtain deeper insight into social organisation and to keep in touch with the practical business of everyday life. They were realists.

John had no frock coat, no books, no acquaintances.

"Borrow my coat," said Fritz.

"No, I will not go and pay court to the professors," said John.

"You are stupid," answered Fritz, and in that he was right, for the professors gave real though somewhat hazy information regarding the courses of study. It was a piece of pride in John that he did not wish to owe his progress to anything but his own work, and what was worse, he thought it ignominious to be regarded as a flunkey. Would not an old professor at once perceive that he was flattering him for his own purposes? To submit himself to his superiors was, in his mind, synonymous with grovelling.

Moreover everything was too indefinite. The university which he had imagined to be an institution for free investigation, was only one for tasks and examinations. The professors gave lectures for the sake of appearances or to maintain their income, but it was useless to go up for an examination without taking private lessons. John resolved to attend those lectures for which no fee was necessary. He went to the Gustavianum to hear a lecture on the history of philosophy. For the three-quarters of an hour during which the lecture lasted the professor went through the introduction to Aristotle's Ethics. John calculated that with three lectures a week he would require forty years to go through the history of philosophy. "Forty years," he thought, "that is too long for me." And did not go again. It was the same everywhere. An assistant-professor expounded Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* with the commentary, in English, to an audience of five.

John went there a few times, but reckoned that it would be ten years before *Henry VIII* was finished.

It began to dawn upon him what the requirements of the degree examination were. The first was to write a Latin essay; therefore he must learn more Latin, which he did not like. He had chosen æsthetics and modern languages as his chief subject. *Æsthetics* comprised the study of Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Literary History and the various systems of æsthetics. That was work enough for a lifetime. The modern languages were French, German, English, Italian and Spanish, with comparative grammar. How was he to obtain the requisite books? And he had not the means of paying for private lessons.

Meanwhile he set to work at *Æsthetics*. He found that one could borrow books from the club and so he took out the volumes of Atterbom's *Prophets and Poets* which happened to be there. These unfortunately only dealt with Swedenborg and contained Thorild's epistles. Swedenborg seemed to him crazy, and Thorild's epistles did not interest him. Swedenborg and Thorild were two arrogant Swedes who had lived in retirement and fallen a prey to megalomania, the special disease of solitary people. It is remarkable how often outbreaks of this hallucination occur in Sweden, owing probably to the isolated position of the country and to the fact that a sparse population is scattered over enormous distances. Megalomania is apparent in the imperial projects of Gustavus Adolphus, in Charles X's ambition of becoming a great European

power, in Charles XII's Attila-like schemes, in Rudbeck's Atlantic-mania, and in Swedenborg's and Thorild's dreams of storming heaven and of world-conflagrations. John thought them mad and threw them aside. Was that the sort of stuff he was expected to read ?

He began to reflect over his situation. What did he expect to do in Upsala ? To support himself for six years on 80 kronas till he took his degree. And then ? his thoughts did not stretch further ; he had no higher plan or ambition than to take his degree—the laurel crown, the graduate's coat, and then to teach the catechism in the Jakob school till his death. No, he did not wish to do that.

Time went on, and Christmas approached. The little stock of money in his table-drawer diminished slowly but surely. And then ? It was not so easy for students to obtain employment as private teachers since the railways had made communication easier between remote country places and the towns where schools were. He felt that he had embarked upon a foolish undertaking. When he found he could get no more books, he began to make visits among his fellow-students and discovered companions in misfortune. Among them were two who had spent the whole term playing chess and possessed nothing between them but a hymn-book which the mother of one had placed in his box. They were also asking themselves the question “ What have we to do here ? ” The way to the degree examination was not easy ; one was compelled to seek out secret ways, bribe door-keepers, creep through holes,

run into debt for books, be seen at lectures and much more besides.

In order to fill up the time, he learnt to play the B-cornet in the band of the students' club by the advice of Fritz who played the trombone. But the practices were very irregular and began to cause disputes. John also played backgammon, which Fritz hated, and so he wandered about to acquaintances with his backgammon board and played with them. He found it as dull as reading Swedenborg.

"Why do you not study?" Fritz often asked him.

"I have no books," answered John. That was a good reason. He could not visit the restaurants, for he had no money, and lived very quietly. At the midday meal he drank only water, and when on Sundays he and Fritz drank half a bottle of beer, they remained sitting at table half-fuddled and telling each other, perhaps for the hundredth time, old school adventures. The term crept along intolerably slow, uneventful and torpid. John perceived that, as one of the lower class, he could plod on thus far but no further. The economic question brought his plans to a standstill. Or was it that he was tired of living a one-sided mental life without muscular exercise? Trifling experiences for which he ought to have been prepared contributed to embitter him. One day Fritz entered their room with a young count. He introduced John to him, and the count tried to remember whether they had not been comrades at the Clara School. John seemed to remember something of

the kind. The old friends and intimate companions addressed each other as "count" and "sir." Then John remembered how he and the young count had once played as boys in a tobacco store on the Sabbatsberg, and how something had made him prophesy, "In a few years, old fellow, we shall not know each other any more." The young count had protested strongly against this and felt hurt. Why did John remember this just then particularly, since it is quite natural that comrades should become strangers to each other when intercourse has been so long broken off? Because at the sight of the noble, he felt the slave blood seethe in his veins. This kind of feeling has been ascribed to the difference of races. But that is not so, for then the stronger plebeian race would feel superior to the weaker aristocratic. It is simply class-hatred.

The count in question was a pale, tall, slender youth of no striking appearance. He was very poor and looked half-starved. He was intelligent, industrious, and not at all proud. Later on in life John came across him again and found him to be a sociable, pleasant man, leading an inconspicuous life as an official, amid difficulties resembling John's own. Why should he hate him? And then they both laughed at their youthful stupidity. That was possible then, for John seemed to have "got ahead" as the saying is; otherwise he would not have laughed at all. "Stand up that I may sit down," this was the more malicious than luminous way of expressing the aspiration of the lower orders in those days. But it was a misunderstanding.

Formerly one strove to elbow one's way up to the other; now one would rather pull the other down to save oneself the trouble of clambering up where nothing is to be found. "Move a little so that we can both sit" would now be the proper formula.

It has been said that those who are "above" are there by a law of necessity and would be there under all circumstances; competition is free and each can ascend if he likes, and if the conditions were changed, the same race would begin again. "Good!" say the lower classes, "let us race again, but come down here and stand where I do. You have got a start with privileges and capital, but now let us be weighed with carriage harness and racing saddle after the modern fashion. You have got ahead by cheating. The race is therefore declared null and void and we will run it again, unless we come to an agreement to do away with all racing, as an antiquated sport of ancient times."

Fritz saw things from another point of view. He did not wish to pull those above down, but to become an aristocrat himself, climb up to them and be like them. He began to lisp and made elegant gestures with his hands, greeted people as though he were a cabinet minister, and threw his head back as though he had a private income. But he respected himself too much to become ridiculous and satirised himself and his ambition. The fact was that the aristocrats whom he wished to resemble had simple, easy, unaffected manners,—some of them indeed quite like the middle class, while Fritz was fashioning himself after an ancient theatrical pattern which

no longer existed. He did not therefore become what he expected in life though he had dozed away many a summer in the castles of his friends, and ended in a very modest official post. He was received as a student in their guest-rooms but came no further; as a district judge he was not introduced in the salons which as a student he had entered without introduction.

The effects of the different circles in which John and Fritz moved began now to be apparent, first in mutual coldness, then in hostility. One evening it broke out at the card-table.

Fritz one day towards the end of the term said to John, "You should not go about with such bounders as you do."

"What is the matter with them?"

"Nothing, but it would be better if you went with me to my friends."

"They don't suit me."

"Well, they suit me, but they think you are proud."

"I?"

"Yes; and to show you are not, come with me this evening and drink punch."

John went though unwillingly. They were a solid-looking set of law-students who played cards. They discussed the stakes for which they should play, and John succeeded in reducing them to a minimum, though they made sour faces. Then a game of "knack" was proposed. John said that he never played it.

"On principle?" he was asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"How long ago did you make that resolve," asked Fritz sarcastically.

"Just this minute."

"Just now, here?"

"Yes, just now, here!" answered John.

They exchanged hostile looks and that was the end. They went home silent; went to bed silent; and got up silent. For five weeks they ate their dinner at the same table and never spoke to each other. A gulf had opened between them and their friendship was ended; they had no more intercourse with each other and there was nothing to bring them together again. How had that come about?

These two characters so opposed to each other had held together for five years through habit, through comradeship in the class-room, and common interests; they had felt drawn to each other by common recollections, defeats and victories. It was a compromise between fire and water which must cease sooner or later and might cease at any moment. Now they flew asunder as if by an explosion; the masks fell; they did not become enemies, but simply discovered that they *were* born enemies, *i. e.* two oppositely-disposed natures which must go, each its own way. They did not close accounts with a quarrel or useless accusations, but simply made an end without more ado. An unnatural silence prevailed at their midday meal; sometimes in lifting dishes their hands crossed but their looks avoided each other; now and then Fritz's lips moved, as though he wished to say something,

but his larynx remained closed. What should he say after all. There was nothing to say but what the silence expressed : " We have nothing more in common."

And yet there was something left after all. Sometimes Fritz came home in the evening, cheerful, and obviously prepared to say, " Come ! cheer up old fellow ! " But then he stood still in the middle of the room, petrified by John's icy manner, and went out again. Sometimes also it occurred to John, who suffered under the breach of friendship to say to his friend, " How stupid we are ! " But then he felt frozen again by Fritz's indifferent manner. They had worn out their friendship by living together. They knew each other by heart, all one another's secrets and weaknesses, and precisely what answer either would give. That was the end. Nothing more remained.

A miserable torpid time followed. Torn away from the common life of school where he had worked like part of a machine in unison with others, and abandoned to himself, he ceased to live in the proper sense of the word. Without books, papers or social intercourse, he remained empty ; for the brain produces of itself very little, perhaps nothing ; in order to make combinations it must be supplied with material from without. Now nothing came ; the channels were stopped, the ways blocked, and his soul pined away. Sometimes he took Fritz's books and looked into them ; among them he came across Geijer's History for the first time. Geijer was a great name and known through his " Kolargosse,"

“Sista Kampen,” “Vikingen” and other poems. John now read his history of Gustav Vasa. He was astonished to find no illuminating point of view nor any fresh information. The style, which he had heard praised, was pedestrian. It was like a mere memorial sketch, this history of a long-lived king’s reign, and cursory also like a text-book. Printed in small type, and without notes, the history of this important king would not have been longer than a small pamphlet. One day John asked some of his friends what they thought of Geijer.

“He is devilish dull,” they answered.

That was the common opinion before jubilee-commemorations and the erection of statues prevented people saying plainly what they thought.

John then looked for a little into law-books, but was alarmed at the idea of having to study that sort of thing. His home life and religious education had given him a distaste for everything that concerned the common interests of people. Through the ceaseless repetition of the maxim that young men should not interfere with politics, that is to say, with the common weal, and through Christian individualism and introspection, John had become a consistent egoist.

“Let every one mind his own business” was the first command of this egotistic morality. Therefore he read no papers and troubled little how things were going on about him, what was happening in the world, how the destinies of men were being shaped, or what were the thoughts of the leading minds of the time. Therefore it never occurred to,

him to go to the meetings of the club where questions of common interest were dealt with. "There were enough to look after those things," he thought.

He was not alone in that opinion, so that the meetings of the club were managed by a few energetic fellows, who were regarded perhaps wrongly, as egoists and managed public business in their own interests. John, who let the affairs of the little society go as they liked, was perhaps a greater egoist, occupied as he was with the affairs of his own soul. But in his own defence and on behalf of many of his countrymen it must be said that he and they were shy. This shyness, however, should have been got rid of at school by practice in public speaking. In this shyness there was also a degree of cowardice, the fear of opposition or ridicule, and especially the fear of being thought presumptuous or wishing to push oneself forward. Every youth who did so, was at once suppressed, for here the aristocracy of seniority prevailed in a very high degree.

When he found the room too stuffy, he went out of the town. But the depressing landscape with its endless expanse of clay made him sad. He was no plain-dweller, but had his roots in the undulating scenery of Stockholm, diversified by water channels. The flat country depressed him and he suffered from homesickness to such a degree that when he returned to Stockholm at Christmas and saw again the smiling contours of the coast of Brunsvik, he was moved to the point of sentimentality. When he saw once more the gentle curves of the woods of

Haga Park he felt his soul, as it were, attuned again, after having been so long out of tune. To such a degree were his nerves affected by his natural surroundings.

Under other circumstances, the society of a smaller town like Upsala would have been more congenial to him than that of the great town which he hated. Had the small town been but a developed form of the village, preserving the simple rustic appliances for health and comfort, with fragments of landscape between the houses, it would have been far preferable to the great town. But now the small town was merely a shabby pretentious copy of the great town with its mistakes, and therefore the more offensive. It also reeked with provinciality. Every one mentioned their birthplace, "My name is Pettersson, from Ostgothland," "Mine is Andersson, from Småland." There was a keen rivalry between the members of different provinces. Those from Stockholm regarded themselves as the first and were therefore envied and despised by the "peasants." There was much dispute as to whom the first place really belonged. The Wörmlanders boasted of having produced Geijer whose portrait hung in their hall, while the Smålanders had Tegner, Berzelius and Linnaeus. The Stockholm students who had only Bergfalk and Bellmann were called "guttersnipes." This was not a very brilliant piece of wit especially as it emanated from a Kalmar student who was thereupon asked "whether there were no gutters in Kalmar?"

There was something pettifogging also in the

way in which the professors fought for advancement by means of pamphlets and newspaper articles. The election to any particular professorial chair rested in the last resource with the Chancellor of the University who lived at Stockholm.

In 1867 the University had no especially distinguished teachers. Some of them were merely old decayed tipplers. Others were young immature dilettantes who had obtained advancement through their wives and the modicum of talent which they possessed. The only one who enjoyed a certain reputation was Swedelius. This, however, was rather due to his bonhomie and the anecdotes which gathered round him, then to his own talent. His learned activity was confined to the composition in an austere style of textbooks and memorial addresses. These were not strictly scientific, but showed traces of original research

On the whole all the subjects of study were introduced from abroad, for the most part from Germany. The textbooks in most departments were in German or French. Very few were in English which was little known. Even the Professor of Literary History could not pronounce English and began his lectures with an apology for not being able to do so. There was no doubt that he knew the language for he had published translations of Swedish poems. "But why did he not learn the pronunciation?" the students asked. Most of the dissertations for degrees were mere compilations from the German; occasionally they were direct translations which caused a scandal.

c

The fact was that the period had no special feature to characterise it. There is no such thing as Swedish culture any more than there is Belgian, Swiss, or Hungarian. Sweden had indeed produced a Linnaeus and a Berzelius, but they had had no successors.

John had no spirit of enterprise. At school his work had been settled for him; at the university it was all left to him. He was overcome by lethargy and listlessness and worried by not knowing what to do at the end of the term. He saw that he must seek for a position in which he could support himself. A friend had told him that one might become an elementary teacher in the country without passing any more examinations and could very well support oneself in such a post. Now it was John's dream to live in the country. He had a natural dislike to towns though he had been born in the metropolis. He could not accustom himself to live without light and air, nor flourish in these streets and market-places, where the outward signs of a higher or lower position in the absurd social scale counted for so much, *e.g.* such subordinate things as dress and manner. He had hostility to culture in his blood and could never conceive of himself as anything else than a natural product, which did not wish to be severed from its organic connection with the earth. He was like a plant vainly feeling with its roots between the pavement-stones for some soil; like an animal pining for the forest.

There is a fish which climbs up trees, and an eel can go on land to look for a pease-field, but both of

them return to the water. Fowls have been domesticated so long that their ancestral characteristics have died out, but they preserve the habit of sleeping on a perch which represents the branch on which the black-cock and the wood-grouse roost. Geese become restless in autumn, for an instinct in their blood tells them that it is migrating time. So in spite of accommodation to new circumstances there is always a tendency to go back.

Thus is it also with men. The dweller in the north, so long as he preserves civilised habits, has not been able to acclimatise himself thoroughly, and is still liable to consumption. His stomach, nerves, heart and skin were able to accommodate themselves, but not his lungs. The Eskimo on the other hand, originally a southerner, succeeded in acclimatising himself but had to give up civilised habits.

And what is the meaning of the northerner's longing for the south unless it be the wish to return to his first home, the land of the sun, the bank of the Ganges where he was cradled ? And the dislike of children to meat, their longing for fruit and love of climbing, what is it all but "reversion to type ?" Therefore civilisation means a continual strain and struggle to combat this backward tendency. Education winds up the clock, but when the mainspring is not strong enough it snaps and the works run down, till quiet ensues. As civilisation advances the strain is ever greater and the statistics of insanity show a perpetual increase. One cannot swim against the stream of civilisation, but one

may escape to land. Modern Socialism which wishes to bring down the upper classes with their worthless and dangerous motto "Higher!" is a backward movement in a healthy direction. The strain will decrease as the pressure from above decreases, and thereby a great deal of superfluous luxury will be got rid of. In certain parts of German Switzerland there is already a certain relative quiet. There we find no restless hunting after honours and distinctions because there are none to be had. A millionaire lives in a large cottage and laughs at the bedizened townsfolk,—a good-natured laugh without any envy in it, for he knows that he could buy up their finery for ready cash, if he chose. But he will not, for luxury has no value in his neighbours' eyes.

Men could therefore be happier if competition were not so keen and they will yet be so, for the chief constituent of happiness is peace along with less toil and less luxury. It is not the railways which are to be blamed, but the superabundance of them. In Arcadian Switzerland railways have ruined whole districts where no freightage is required and people usually go on foot. To this day distances are reckoned by pedestrian measures.

"It is eight hours to Zurich," says some one.

"Eight! is it possible?"

"Yes, certainly."

"By the railway?"

"Oh! by the railway,—that is only an hour and a half."

In Sweden there is a railway which carries regu-

lately three passengers in its three classes, a factory-owner, a bailiff and a clerk. We may live to see them shut up the railway stations for want of coal when the coal strikes have sent up the price, for want of guards when wages rise, and for want of freight when wood and oats can no longer be procured; iron is already too dear to be used for railways, and the old water-ways ought to be tried.

It is no use to preach against civilisation,—that one knows well, but if we observe the currents of the time we shall see that a return to nature is in process of going on. Turgenieff has already described this by the word “simplification.” That is the mistake of the evolutionists that in everything which is in motion or course of development they see a progress towards human happiness, forgetting that a sickness may develop to death or recovery.

After all, what a superficial appendage civilisation is! Make a nobleman drunk and he can become like a savage; let a child loose in a wood without any one to look after it (provided that it can feed itself) and it will not learn to speak of itself. Out of a peasant’s son who is generally considered so low in the social scale, one can make in a single generation a man of science, a minister, an archbishop, or an artist. Here there can be no talk of heredity, for the peasant-father who stood apparently at such a low level, could not have inherited anything from cultivated brains. On the other hand, the children of a genius inherit usually nothing but used-up brains, except occasionally a skill in their father’s line of work, which

they have acquired by daily intercourse with their father.

The town is the fire-place whither the living fuel from the country is brought and devoured ; it is to keep the present social machinery at work, it is true, but in the long run the fuel will prove too dear, and the machine come to a standstill. The society of the future will not need this machine in order to work or they will be more sparing of the fuel. But it is a mistake to conjecture the needs of a future state of society from the present one.

Our present society is perhaps a natural product, but inorganic ; the future society will be an organic product and a higher one, for it will not deprive men of the first conditions for an organic existence. There will be the same difference between these two forms of society as between paved streets and grass meadows.

The youth's dream often left artificial society to wander at large in nature. Society had been formed by men doing violence to natural laws, just as one may bleach a plant under a flower-pot and produce an edible salad, but the plant's capacity to live healthily and propagate itself as a plant is destroyed. Such a plant is the civilised man made by artificial bleaching useful for an anæmic society, but, as an individual, wretched and unhealthy. Must the process of bleaching continue in order to insure the existence of this decayed society ? Must the individual remain wretched in order to maintain an unhealthy society ? For how can society be healthy when its individual members are ailing ?

A single individual cannot demand that society should be sacrificed for his sake, but a majority of individuals have a right to bring about such changes in the society, which they themselves compose, as may be beneficial to themselves.

Under the simpler conditions of country life John believed he could be happy in an obscure post, without feeling that he had sunk in the social scale. But he could not be so in the town where he would be continually reminded of the height from which he had fallen. To come down voluntarily is not painful if the onlookers can be persuaded that it is voluntarily, but to fall is bitter, especially as a fall always arouses satisfaction in those standing below. To mount, strive upwards and better one's position has become a social instinct, and the youth felt the force of it, though in his view the "upper" was not always higher.

John wished now to realise some result,—an active life which should bring him an income. He looked through many advertisements for teachers in elementary schools. Positions were advertised to which were attached salaries of 300 or 600 kronas, a house, a meadow and a garden. He tried for one of these places after another but obtained no answer.

When the term was over and his 80 kronas spent, he returned home, not knowing whither to turn, what he should become, or how he should live. He had glanced in the forecourt and seen that there was no room in it for him.

## CHAPTER II

### BELOW AND ABOVE

“ **ARE** you a complete scholar now? ” With this and similar questions John was greeted ironically on his return home. His father took the matter seriously and strove to frame plans without coming to any result. John was a student; that was a fact; but what was to follow?

It was winter, and so the white student cap could not bestow on him a mild halo of glory or bring any honour to the family. Some one has asserted that war would cease if uniforms were done away with; and it is certain there would not be so many students if they had no outward sign to parade. In Paris where they have none, they disappear in the crowd, and no one makes a fuss about them; in Berlin on the other hand, they have a privileged place by the side of officers. Therefore also Germany is a land of professors and France of the bourgeois.

John’s father now saw that he had educated a good-for-nothing for society who could not dig, but perhaps was not ashamed to beg. The world stood open for the youth to starve or to perish in. His father did not like his idea of becoming an elementary school-teacher. Was that to be the only result of so much work? His ambitious

dreams received a shock from the idea of such a come-down. An elementary school-teacher was on a level with a sergeant, on a plane from which there was no hope of mounting. Climb one must as long as others did ; one must climb till one broke one's neck, so long as society was divided into ranks and classes. John had not passed the student's examination for the sake of knowledge, but of belonging to the upper class, and now he seemed to be meditating a descent to the lower.

It became painful for him at home for he felt as though he were eating the bread of charity when Christmas was over, and he could no longer be regarded as a Christmas guest.

One day he accidentally met in the street a school-teacher whom he knew, and whom he had not seen for a long time. They talked about the future and John's friend suggested to him a post in the Stockholm elementary school as suitable for him while reading for his degree. He would get a thousand kronas salary and have an hour to himself daily. John objected " Anywhere except in Stockholm." His friend replied that several students had been teachers in the elementary school, " Really ! then he would have companions in misfortune." Yes, and one had come from the New Elementary School where he was a teacher. John went, made an application, and was appointed with a salary of 900 kronas. His father approved his decision when he heard that it would help him to read for his degree, and John undertook to live as a boarder at home.

One winter morning at half-past eight, John went down the Nordtullsgata to the Clara School, exactly as he had done when he was eight years old. There were the same streets and the same Clara bells, and he was to teach the lowest class ! It was like being put back to learn a lesson of eleven years ago. Just as afraid as then,—yes, more afraid of coming too late he entered the large class-room, where together with two female teachers he was to have the oversight of a hundred children. There they sat,—children like those in the Jakob School, but younger. Ugly, stunted, pale, swollen, sickly, with cast-down looks, in coarse clothes and heavy shoes. Suffering, most probably, suffering from the consciousness that others were more fortunate, and would always be so, as one then believed, had impressed on their faces the stamp of pain, which neither religious resignation nor the hope of heaven could obliterate. The upper classes avoided them with a bad conscience, built themselves houses outside the town, and left it to the professional overseers of the poor to come in contact with these outcasts.

A hymn was sung, the Lord's Prayer was read ; everything was as before ; no progress had been made except that the forms had been exchanged for seats and desks, and the room was light and airy. John had to fold his hands and join in the hymn, thus already being obliged to do violence to his conscience. Prayers over, the head-master entered. He spoke to John in a fatherly way and as his superintendent gave him instruction and

advice. This class, he said, was the worst, and the teacher must be strict.

So John took his class into a special room to begin the lesson. The room was exactly like that in the Clara School, and there stood the dreadful desk with steps, which resembled a scaffold and was painted red as though stained with blood. A stick was put into his hand with which he might rap or strike as he chose. He mounted the scaffold. He felt shy before the thirsty faces of girls and boys opposite who looked curiously at him, to see if he were going to worry them.

“What is your lesson?” he asked.

“The first commandment,” the whole class exclaimed.

“Only one must answer at a time. You, top boy, what is your name?”

“Hallberg,” cried the whole class.

“No, only one at a time,—the one I ask.”

The children giggled. “He is not dangerous,” they thought.

“Well, then, what is the first commandment?” John asked the top boy.

“Thou shalt have no other gods but Me.” He knew that then.

“What is that?” John asked again, trying to lay as little emphasis as possible on the “that.” Then he asked fifteen children the same question and a quarter of an hour had passed. John thought this idiotic. What should he do now? Say what he knew about God? But the common point of view then was, that nothing was known about Him.

John was a theist, and still believed in a personal God, but could say nothing more. He would have liked to have attacked the divinity of Christ, but would have been dismissed had he done so.

A pause followed. There was an unnatural stillness while he reflected on his false position and the foolish method of teaching. If he had now said that nothing was known of God, the whole catechism and Bible instruction would have been superfluous. They knew that they must not steal or lie. Why then make such a fuss ? He felt a mad wish to make friends and fellow-sinners of the children.

“ What shall we do now ? ” he said.

The whole class looked at each other and giggled. “ This is a jolly sort of teacher, ” they thought.

“ What must the teacher do when he has heard the lesson ? ” he asked the top boy.

“ Hm ! he generally explains it, ” he and one or two others answered.

John could certainly explain the origin and growth of the conception of God, but that would not do.

“ You need not do any more, ” he said, “ but don’t make a noise.”

The children looked at him, and he at them mutually smiling.

“ Don’t you think this is absurd, ” he felt inclined to say, but checked himself and only smiled. But he collected himself when he saw that they were laughing at him. “ This method would not do, ” he thought. So he commanded attention and went through the first commandment again till each

child had had a question. After extraordinary exertions on his part, the clock at last struck nine, and the lesson was over.

Then the three divisions of the class were assembled in the great hall to prepare for going into the play-ground to get fresh air. "Prepare" is the right word for such a simple affair as going into the play-ground demanded a long preparation. An exact description would fill a whole printed page, and perhaps be regarded as a caricature; we will be content with giving a hint.

In the first place, all the hundred children had to sit motionless, absolutely motionless, and silent, absolutely silent, in their seats as though they were to be photographed. From the master's desk the whole assembly looked like a grey carpet with bright patterns, but the next moment one of them moved the head; the offender had to rise from his seat and stand by the wall. The total effect was now disturbed, and there had to be a good many raps with the cane before two hundred arms lay parallel on the desks and a hundred heads were at right angles with their collar-bones. When quiet was in some degree restored a new rapping began which demanded absolute quiet. But at the very moment when the absolute was all but attained, some muscle grew tired, some nerve slackened, some sinew relaxed. Again there was confusion, cries, blows, and a new attempt to reach the absolute. It generally ended by the female teacher (the males did not drive it so far) closing one eye and pretending that the absolute had been reached.

Then came the important moment, when, at a given signal the whole hundred must spring from their seats and stand in order, but nothing more. It was a ticklish moment when slates fell down and rulers clattered. Then they had to sit down and begin all over again by keeping perfectly still.

When they had really got on their legs, they were marched off in divisions but on tip-toe without exception. Otherwise they had to turn round and sit down again, get up again and so on. They had to go on tip-toe in wooden sabots and water-boots. It was a great mistake; it accustomed the children to stealthiness and gave their whole appearance something cat-like and deceitful. In the play-ground a teacher had to arrange those who wanted to drink in a straight line before the water-tap by the entrance; at the same time the lavatories at the other end of the play-ground had to be inspected, and games had to be organised and watched over. Then the children were again drawn up and marched into school. If it was not done quietly, they had to go out again.

Then another lesson began. The children read out of a patriotic reading-book the principal object of which seemed to be to instil respect for the upper classes and to represent Sweden as the best country in Europe, although as regards climate and social economy, it is one of the worst, its culture is borrowed from abroad, and all its kings were of foreign origin. They did not venture to give such teaching to the children of the upper classes in the Clara School and the Lyceum, but in the Jakob School

they had sufficient courage to make poor children sing a patriotic song about the Duke of Ostgothland. In this occurred a verse addressed to the crew of the fleet, saying victory was sure in the battle they wished for "because Prince Oscar leads us on," or something of the sort.

Meanwhile the reading-lesson began. But just at that moment the head-master came in. John wished to stop but the head-master beckoned to him to go on. The children who had lost their respect for him after the catechism-lesson were inattentive. John scolded them, but without result. Then the head-master came forward with a cane ; took the book from John and made a little speech, to the effect that this division was the worst, but now their teacher should see how to deal with them. The exercise which followed seemed to have as its object the attainment of perfect attention. The absolute again seemed to be the standard by which these children were to be trained in this incomplete world of relativity.

The boy who was reading was interrupted, and another name called at random out of the class. To follow attentively was assumed to be the easiest thing in the world by this old man who certainly must have experienced how thoughts wander their own way while the eyes pass over the printed page. The inattentive one was dragged by his hair or clothes and caned till he fell howling on the ground.

Then the head-master departed after recommending John to use the cane diligently. There remained nothing but to follow this method or to go ; the latter

did not suit John's plans, therefore he remained. He made a speech to the children and referred to the head-master. "Now," he said, "you know how you must behave if you want to escape a thrashing. He who gets one, has himself to thank. Don't blame me. Here is the stick, and there is your lesson. Learn your lesson or you will get the stick,—and it isn't my fault."

That was cunningly put, but it was unmerciful, for one ought to have first ascertained how far the children could do their work. They could not, for they were the most lively and therefore the most inattentive. So the cane was kept going all day, accompanied by cries of pain, and fear on the faces of the innocent. It was terrible ! To pay attention is not in the power of the will, and therefore all this punishment was mere torture. John felt the absurdity of the part he had to play, but he had to do his duty. Sometimes he was tired and let things go as they liked, but then his colleagues, male and female, came and made friendly representations. Sometimes he found the whole thing so ridiculous that he could not help smiling with the children while he caned them. Both sides saw that they were working at something impossible and unnecessary.

Ibsen, who does not believe in the aristocracy of birth or of wealth, has lately (1886) expressed his belief that the industrial class are the true nobility. But why should they necessarily be so ? If to do no manual labour tends to degeneration, perhaps degeneration is brought about even more quickly

by excessive labour and want. All these children born of manual labourers looked more sickly, weak and stupid than the upper-class children which he had seen. One or the other muscle might be more strongly developed,—a shoulder-blade, a hand, or a foot,—but they looked anæmic under their pale skins. Many had extraordinarily large heads which seemed to be swollen with water, their ears and noses ran, their hands were frost-bitten. The various professional diseases of town-labourers seemed to have been inherited ; one saw in miniature the gas-worker's lungs and blood spoilt by sulphur-fumes, the smith's shoulders and feet bent outwards, the painter's brain atrophied by varnishes and poisonous colours, the scrofulous eruption of the chimney sweeper, the contracted chest of the book-binder ; here one heard the cough of the workers in metal and asphalt, smelt the poisons of the paper-stainer, observed the watch-maker's short-sightedness, in second editions, so to speak. In truth this was no race to which the future belonged, or on which the future could build ; nor was it a race which could permanently increase, for the ranks of the workers are continually recruited from the country.

C'est  
? exact  
cancel!

It was not till about two o'clock that the great school-room was emptied, for it took them about an hour with blows and raps to get out of it into the street. The most unpractical part of it was that the children had to march into the hall in troops to get their overcoats and cloaks, and then march into the school-room again, instead of going straight

home. When John got into the street, he asked himself "Is that the celebrated education which they have given to the lower classes with so much sacrifice?" He could ask, and he was answered, "Can it be done in any other way?" "No," he was obliged to answer. "If it is your intention to educate a slavish lower class, always ready to obey, train them with the stick,—if you mean to bring up a proletariat to demand nothing of life, tell them lies about heaven. Tell them that your method of teaching is ridiculous, let them begin to criticise or get their way in one point and you have taken a step towards the dissolution of society. But society is built up upon an obedient conscientious lower class; therefore keep them down from the first; deprive them of will and reason, and teach them to hope for nothing but to be content." There was method in this madness.

As regards the instruction in the elementary school, there was both a good and bad side to it; the good was that they had introduced object-teaching after the example of Pestalozzi, Rousseau's disciple; the bad, that the students who taught in the elementary schools had introduced "scientific" teaching. The simple learning by heart of the multiplication table was not enough; it, together with fractions, had to be understood. Understood? And yet an engineer who has been through the technical high school cannot explain "why" a fraction can be diminished by three if the sum of the figures is divisible by three. On this principle seamen would not be allowed to use logarithm tables,

because they cannot calculate logarithms. To be always relaying the foundation instead of building on what is already laid is an educational luxury and leads to the over-multiplication of lessons in schools.

Some one may object that John should first have reformed himself as teacher, before he set about reforming the system of education; but he could not; he was a passive instrument in the hands of the superintendent and the school authorities. The best teachers, that is to say, those who forced the worst (in this case the best) results out of the pupils were the uneducated ones who came from the Seminary. They were not sceptical about the methods in use and had no squeamishness about caning, but the children respected them the most. A great coarse fellow who had formerly been a carriage-maker had the bigger boys completely under his thumb. The lower class seem to have really more fear and respect for those of their own rank than the upper class. Bailiffs and foremen are more awe-imposing than superintendents and teachers. Do the lower classes see that the superior who has come out of their ranks understands their affairs better, and therefore pay him more respect? The female teachers also enjoyed more respect than the male. They were pedantic, demanded absolute perfection, and were not at all soft-hearted, but rather cruel. They were fond of practising the refined cruelty of blows on the palm of the hand and showed in so doing a want of intelligence which the most superficial study of physiology would have

remedied. When a child by involuntary reflex action, drew his fingers back, he was punished all the more for not keeping his fingers still. As if one could prevent blinking, when something blew into one's eye ! The female teachers had the advantage of knowing very little about teaching and were plagued with no doubts. It was not true that they had less pay than the men teachers. They had relatively more ; and if after passing a paltry teacher's examination they had received more than the students, that would have been unjust. They were treated with partiality, regarded as miracles, when they were competent, and received allowances for travelling abroad.

As comrades, they were friendly and helpful if one was polite and submissive and let them hold the reins. There was not the slightest trace of flirtation ; the men saw them in anything but becoming situations, and under an aspect which women do not usually show to the other sex, viz. that of jailers. They made notes of everything, prepared themselves for their lessons, were narrow-minded and content, and saw through nothing. It was a very suitable occupation for them under existing circumstances.

When John was thoroughly sick of caning, or could not manage a boy, or was in despair generally, he sent the black sheep to a female teacher, who willingly undertook the unpleasant rôle of executioner.

What it is that makes the competent teacher is not clear. Some produced an effect by their quiet manner, others by their nervousness ; some seemed

to magnetise the children, others beat them ; some imposed on them by their age or their manly appearance, etc. The women worked as women, *i.e.* through a half-forgotten tradition of a past matriarchate.

John was not competent. He looked too young and was only just nineteen ; he was sceptical about the methods employed and everything else ; with all his seriousness he was playful and boyish. The whole matter to him was only an employment by the way, for he was ambitious and wished to advance, but did not know in which direction.

Moreover he was an aristocrat like his contemporaries. Through education his habits and senses had been refined, or spoilt, as one may choose to call it ; he found it hard to tolerate unpleasant smells, ugly objects, distorted bodies, coarse expressions, torn clothes. Life had given him much, and these daily reminders of poverty plagued him like an evil conscience. He himself might have been one of the lower class if his mother had married one of her own position.

“He was proud” a shop-boy would have said, who had mounted to the position of editor of a paper and boasted that he was content with his lot, forgetting that he might well be content since he had risen from a low position. “He was proud” a master shoemaker would have said, who would have rather thrown himself into the sea than become an apprentice again. John *was* proud, of that there was no doubt, as proud as the master shoemaker, but not in such a high degree, as he had descended

from the level of the student to the elementary school-teacher. That, however, was no virtue, but a necessity, and he did not therefore boast of his step downward, nor give himself the air of being a friend of the people. One cannot command sympathies and antipathies, and for the lower class to demand love and self-sacrifice from the upper class is mere idealism. The lower class is sacrificed for the upper class, but they have offered themselves willingly. They have the right to take back their rights, but they should do it themselves. No one gives up his position willingly, therefore the lower class should not wait for kings and the upper class to go. "Pull us down ! but all together."

If an intelligent man of the upper class help in such an operation, those below should be thankful to him especially since such an act is liable to the imputation of being inspired by impure motives. Therefore the lower class should not too narrowly inspect the motives of those who help them ; the result is in all cases the same. The aristocrats seem to have seen this and therefore regard one of themselves who sides with the proletariat as a traitor. He is a traitor to his class, that is true ; and the lower class should put it to his credit.

John was not an aristocrat in the sense that he used the word "mob" or despised the poor. Through his mother he was closely allied to them, but circumstances had estranged him from them. That was the fault of class-education. This fault might be done away with for the future, if elementary schools were reformed by the inclusion of the know-

ledge of civil duties in their programme, and by their being made obligatory for all, without exception, as the militia-schools are. Then it would be no longer a disgrace to become an elementary school-teacher as it now is, and made a matter of reproach to a man that he has been one.

John, in order to keep himself above, applied himself to his future work. To this end he studied Italian grammar in his spare time at the school. He could now buy books and did so. He was honest enough not to construe these efforts at climbing up as an ideal thirst for knowledge or a striving for the good of humanity. He simply read for his degree.

But the meagre diet he had lived on in Upsala, his midday meals at 6 kronas, the milk and the bread had undermined his strength, and he was now in the pleasure-seeking period of youth. It was tedious at home, and in the afternoons he went to the café or the restaurant, where he met friends. Strong drinks invigorated him and he slept well after them. The desire for alcohol seems to appear regularly in each adolescent. All northerners are born of generations of drinkers from the early heathen times, when beer and mead was drunk, and it is quite natural that this desire should be felt as a necessity. With John it was an imperious need the suppression of which resulted in a diminution of strength. It may be questioned whether abstinence for us may not involve the same risk, as the giving up of poison for an arsenic-eater. Probably the otherwise praiseworthy temperance

movement will merely end in demanding moderation ; that is a virtue and not a mere exhibition of will power which results in boasting and self-righteousness.

John who had hitherto only worn cast-off suits, began to wear fine clothes. His salary seemed to him extraordinarily great and in the magnifying-glass of his fancy assumed huge proportions, with the result that he soon ran into debt. Debt which grew and grew and could never be paid, became the vulture gnawing at his life, the object of his dreams, the wormwood which poisoned his content. What foolish hopefulness, what colossal self-deceit it was to incur debts ! What did he expect ? To gain an academic dignity. And then ? To become a teacher with a salary of 750 kronas ! Less than he had now ! Not the least trying part of his work was to accommodate his brain to the capacity of the children. That meant to come down to the level of the younger and less intelligent, and to screw down the hammer so that it might hit the anvil,—an operation which injured the machine.

On the other hand he derived real profit from his observations in the families of the children, whom his duty required him to visit on Sundays. There was one boy in his class who was the most difficult of all. He was dirty and ill-dressed, grinned continually, smelt badly, never knew his lessons and was always being caned. He had a very large head and staring eyes which rolled and turned about continually. John had to visit his

parents in order to find out the reason of his irregular attendance at school and bad behaviour. He therefore went to the Apelbergsgata where they kept a public-house. He found that the father had gone to work, but the mother was at the counter. The public-house was dark and evil-smelling, filled with men who looked threateningly at John as he entered probably taking him for a plain clothes policeman. He gave his message to the mother and was asked into a room behind the counter. One glance at it sufficed to explain everything. The mother blamed her son and excused him alternately and she had some reason for the latter. The boy was accustomed to "lick the glasses,"—that was the explanation and that was enough. What could be done in such a case? A change of dwelling, better food, a nurse to look after him and so on. All these were questions of money!

Afterwards he came to the Clara poor-house, which was empty of its usual occupants and provisionally opened to families because of the want of houses. In a great hall lay and stood quite a dozen families, who had divided the floor with strokes of chalk. There stood a carpenter with his planing-bench, here sat a shoemaker with his board; round about on both sides of the chalk-line women sat and children crawled. What could John do there? Send in a report on a matter which was perfectly well known, distribute wood-tickets and orders for meat and clothing.

In Kungsholmsbergen he came across specimens of proud poverty. There he was shown the door,

"God be thanked, we have no need of charity. We are all right."

"Indeed! Then you should not let your boy go in torn boots in winter."

"That is not your business, sir," and the door was slammed.

Sometimes he saw sad scenes,—a child sick, the room full of sulphur fumes of coke, and all coughing from the grandmother down to the youngest. What could he do except feel dispirited and make his escape? At that period there was no other means of help except charity; writers who described the state of things, contented themselves with lamenting it; no one saw any hope. Therefore there was nothing to do except to be sorry, help temporarily, and fly in order not to despair.

All this lay like a heavy cloud upon him, and he lost pleasure in study. He felt there was something wrong here, but nothing could be done said all the newspapers and books and people. It must be so but every one is free to climb. You climb too!

Time went on and spring approached. John's closest acquaintance was a teacher from the Slöjd School. He was a poet, well-versed in literature, and also musical. They generally walked to the Stallmästergården restaurant, discussed literature, and ate their supper there. While John was paying his attentions to the waitress, his friend played the piano. Sometimes the latter amused himself by writing comic verses to girls. John was seized with a craze for writing verse but could not. The gift must be born with one, he thought,

and inspiration descend all of a sudden, as in the case of conversion. He was evidently not one of the elect, and felt himself neglected by nature and maimed.

One evening when John was sitting and chatting with the girl, she said quite suddenly to him, "Friday is my birthday; you must write some verses for me."

"Yes," answered John, "I will."

Later on when he met his friend, he told him of his hasty promise.

"I will write them for you," he said. The next day he brought a poem, copied out in a fine handwriting and composed in John's name. It was piquant and amusing. John dispatched it on the morning of the birthday.

In the evening of the same day both the friends came to eat their supper and to congratulate the girl. She did not appear for an hour for she had to serve guests. The teachers' meal was brought and they began to eat.

Then the girl appeared in the doorway and beckoned John. She looked almost severe. John went to her and they ascended a flight of stairs. "Have you written the verses?" she asked.

"No," said John.

"Ah, I thought so. The lady behind the buffet said she had read them two years ago when the teacher sent them to Majke who was an ugly girl. For shame, John!"

He took his cap and wanted to rush out, but the girl caught hold of him and tried to keep him back

for she saw that he looked deathly pale and beside himself. But he wrenched himself free and hastened into the Bellevue Park. He ran into the wood leaving the beaten tracks. The branches of the bushes flew into his face, stones rolled over his feet, and frightened birds rose up. He was quite wild with shame, and instinctively sought the wood in order to hide himself. It is a curious phenomenon that at the utmost pitch of despair a man runs into the wood before he plunges into the water. The wood is the penultimate and the water the ultimate resource. It is related of a famous author, who had enjoyed a twenty years' popularity quietly and proudly, that he was suddenly cast down from his position. He was as though struck by a thunder-bolt, went half-mad and sought the shelter of the woods where he recovered himself. The wood is the original home of the savage and the enemy of the plough and therefore of culture. When a civilised man suddenly strips off the garb of civilisation, the artistically woven fabric of his repute, he becomes in a moment a savage or a wild beast. When a man becomes mad, he begins to throw off his clothes. What is madness? A relapse? Yes, many think animals mad.

It was evening when John entered the wood. In the midst of some bushes he laid down on a great block of stone. He was ashamed of himself,—that was the chief impression on his mind. An emotional man is more severe with himself than others think. He scourged himself unmercifully. He had wished to shine in borrowed plumage, and so lied; and in

the second place he had insulted an innocent girl. The first part of the accusation affected him in a very sensitive point,—his want of poetic capacity. He wished to do more than he could. He was discontent with the position which nature and society had assigned him. Yes, but (and now his self-defence began after the evening air had cooled his blood), in the school one had been always exhorted to strive upwards; those who did so were praised, and discontent with the position one might happen to be in, was justified. Yes but (here the scourge descended !) he had tried to deceive. To deceive ! That was unpardonable. He was ashamed, stripped and unmasked without any means of retreat. Deception, falsity, cheating ! So it was !

As a quondam Christian, John was most afraid of having a fault, and as a member of society he feared lest it should be visible. Everybody knew that one had faults, but to acknowledge them was regarded as a piece of cynicism, for society always wishes to appear better than it is. Sometimes, however, society demanded that one should confess one's fault if one wished for forgiveness, but that was a trick. Society wished for confession in order to enjoy the punishment, and was very deceitful. John had confessed his fault, been punished, and still his conscience was uneasy.

The second point regarding the girl was also difficult. She had loved him purely and he had insulted her. How coarse and vulgar ! Why should he think that a waitress could not love innocently ? His own mother had been in the same position

as that girl. He had insulted her. Shame upon him !

Now he heard shouts in the park, and his name being called. The girl's voice and his friend's echoed among the trees, but he did not answer them. For a moment the scourge fell out of his hands ; he became sobered and thought, " I will go back, we will have supper, call Riken and drink a glass with her, and it will be all over." But no ! He was too high up and one cannot descend all at once.

The voices became silent. He lay back in a state of semi-stupefaction and ground his double crime between the mill-stones of rumination. He had lied and hurt her feelings.

It began to grow dark. There was a rustling in the bushes ; he started and a sweat broke out upon him. Then he went out and sat upon a seat till the dew fell. He shivered and felt poorly. Then he got up and went home.

Now his head was clear and he could think. What a stupid business it all was ! He did not really mean that she should take him for a poet, and had been quite ready to explain the whole trick. It was all a joke. His friend had made a fool of him, but it did not matter.

When he got home he found his friend sleeping in his bed. He wanted to rise but John would not let him. He wished to scourge himself once more. He lay on the floor, put a cigar-box under his head and drew a volunteer's cloak over him. In the morning when he awoke, John asked in trembling tones, " How did she take it ? "

“ Ah, she laughed ; then we drank a glass, and it was over. She liked the verses.”

“ She laughed ! Was she not angry ? ”

“ Not at all.”

“ Then she only humbugged me.”

John wished to hear no more. This trifle had kept him on the rack for a whole dreadful night. He felt ashamed of having asked whether she was disquieted about him. But since she had laughed and drunk punch she could not have been. Not even anxious about his life !

He dressed himself and went down to the school.

The habit of self-criticism derived from his religious training had accustomed him to occupy himself with his ego, to fondle and cherish it, as though it were a separate and beloved personality. So cherished the ego expanded and kept continually looking within instead of without upon the world. It was an interesting personal acquaintance, a friend who must be flattered, but who must also hear the truth and be corrected.

It was the mental malady of the time reduced to a system by Fichte, who taught that everything took place in the ego and through the ego, without which there was no reality. It was the formula for romanticism and for subjective idealism.

“ I stood on the shore under the king’s castle,” “ I dwell in the cave of the mountain,” “ I, small boy, watch the door,” “ I think of the beautiful times,”—all these phrases struck the same note. Was this “ I ” really so proud. Was not the poet’s “ I ” more modest than the editor’s royal “ we ” ?

This absorption in self, or the new malady of culture, of which much is written nowadays, has been common with all men who have not worked with their bodies. The brain is only an organ for imparting movement to the muscles. Now when in a civilised man the brain cannot act upon the muscles, nor bring its power into play, there results a disturbance of equilibrium. The brain begins to dream ; too full of juices which cannot be absorbed by muscular activity, it converts them involuntarily into systems, into thought-combinations, into the hallucinations which haunt painters, sculptors and poets. If no outlet can be found, there follows stagnation, violent outbreaks, depression, and at last madness. Schools which are often vestibules for asylums, have recourse to gymnastics, but with what result ? There is no connection between the pupil's cerebral activity and the muscular activity called into play by gymnastics ; the latter is only directed by another's will through the word of command.

All studious youths are aware of this tendency to congestion of the brain. It is a good thing that they often go out to improve or to beautify society, but it would be better if the equilibrium were restored, and a sound mind dwelt in a sound body. It has been sought to introduce physical work into schools as a remedy. It would be better to let elementary knowledge be acquired at home, to make the school a day-school, and to let every one look after himself. For the rest the emancipation of the lower classes will compel the higher classes to

undertake some of the physical labour now carried on by domestics and so the equilibrium will be restored. That such labour does not blunt the intelligence can be easily seen by observing that some of the strongest minds of the time have had such daily contact with reality, *e.g.* Mill the civil service official, Spencer, the civil engineer, Edison the telegraphist. The student period of life, the most unwholesome because not under discipline, is also the most dangerous. The brain continually takes in, without producing anything, not even anything intellectual, while the whole muscular system is unoccupied.

John at this time was suffering from an over-production of thought and imagination. The mechanical school-work continually revolving in the same circle with the same questions and answers afforded no relief. It increased on the other hand his stock of observations of children and teachers. There lay and fermented in his mind a quantity of experiences, perceptions, criticisms and thoughts without any order. He therefore sought for society in order to speak his mind out. But it was not sufficient, and as he did not find any one who was willing to act as a sounding-board, he took to declaiming poetry.

In the early sixties declamation was much the fashion. In families they used to read aloud "The Kings of Salamis." In the numerous volunteer concerts the same pieces were declaimed over and over again. These declaimations were what the quartette singing had been, an outlet for all the hope

and enthusiasm called forth by the awakening of 1865. Since Swedes are neither born nor trained orators, they became singers and reciters, perhaps because their want of originality sought a ready-made means of expression. They could execute but not create. The same want of originality showed itself in the bachelor's gatherings where reciters of anecdotes were much in request. This feeble and tedious form of amusement was superseded when the new questions of the day provided food for conversation and discussion.

One day John came to his friend the elementary school-teacher whom he found together with another young colleague. When the conversation began to slacken, his friend produced a volume of Schiller, whose poems had just then appeared in a cheap edition and were bought mostly for that reason. They opened "The Robbers" and read round in turn, John taking the part of Karl Moor. The first scene of the first act took place between old Moor and Franz. Then came the second scene : John read, "I am sick of this quill-driving age when I read of great men in Plutarch." He did not know the play and had never seen bandits. At first he read absent-mindedly, but his interest was soon aroused. The play struck a new note. He found his obscure dreams expressed in words ; his rebellious criticisms printed. Here then was another, a great and famous author who felt the same disgust at the whole course of education in school and university as he did, who would rather be Robinson Crusoe or a bandit than be enrolled in this army which is

called society. He read on ; his voice shook, his cheeks glowed, his breast heaved : "They bar out healthy nature with tasteless conventionalities." . . . There it stood all in black and white. "And that is Schiller ! " he exclaimed, "the same Schiller who wrote the tedious history of the Thirty Years' War, and the tame drama "Wallenstein" which is read in schools ! " Yes, it was the same man. Here (in "The Robbers") he preached revolt, revolt against law, society, morals and religion. That was in the revolt of 1781 eight years before the great revolution. That was the anarchists' programme a hundred years before its time, and Karl Moor was a nihilist. The drama came out with a lion on the title-page and with the inscription "In Tyrannos." The author then (1781) aged two-and-twenty had to fly. There was no doubt therefore about the intention of the piece. There was also another motto from Hippocrates which showed this intention as plainly ; "What is not cured by medicine must be cured by iron ; what is not cured by iron must be cured by fire."

That was clear enough ! But in the preface the author apologised and recanted. He disclaimed all sympathy with Franz Moor's sophisms and said that he wished to exhibit the punishment of wickedness in Karl Moor. Regarding religion he said, "Just now it is the fashion to make religion a subject for one's wit to play upon as Voltaire and Frederick the Great did, and a man is scarcely reckoned a genius unless he can make the holiest truths the object of his godless satire. . . . I hope

I have exacted no ordinary revenge for religion and sound morality in handing over these obstinate despisers of Scripture in the person of this scoundrelly bandit, to public contumely. Was then Schiller true when he wrote the drama, and false when he wrote the preface? True in both cases, for man is a complex creature, and sometimes appears in his natural sometimes in his artificial character. At his writing-table in loneliness, when the silent letters were being written down on paper, Schiller seems like other young authors to have worked under the influence of a blind natural impulse without regard to mens' opinion, without thinking of the public, or laws, or constitutions. The veil was lifted for a moment and the falsity of society seen through in its whole extent. The silence of the night when literary work—especially in youth,—is carried on, causes one to forget the noisy artificial life outside, and darkness hides the heaps of stones over which animals which are ill-adapted to their environment stumble. Then comes the morning, the light of day, the street noises, men, friends, police, clocks striking, and the seer is afraid of his own thoughts. Public opinion raises its cry, newspapers sound the alarm, friends drop off, it becomes lonely round one, and an irresistible terror seizes the attacker of society. "If you will not be with us," society says, "then go into the woods. If you are an animal ill-adapted to its environment, or a savage, we will deport you to a lower state of society which you will suit." And from its own point of view society is right and always will be right.

But the society of the future will celebrate the revolter, the individual, who has brought about social improvement, and the revolter is justified long after his death.

In every intelligent youth's life there comes a moment when he is in the transition stage between family life and that of society, when he feels disgusted at artificial civilisation and breaks out. If he remains in society, he is soon suppressed by the united wet-blankets of sentiment and anxiety about living; he becomes tired, dazzled, drops off and leaves other young men to continue the fight. This unsophisticated glance into things, this outbreak of a healthy nature which must of necessity take place in an unspoilt youth, has been stigmatised by a name which is intended to depreciate the idealistic impulses of youth. It is called "spring fever" by which is meant that it is only a temporary illness of childhood, a rising of the vernal sap, which produces stoppage of the circulation and giddiness. But who knows whether the youth did not see right before society put out his eyes? And why do they despise him afterwards?

Schiller had to creep into a public post for the sake of a living and even eat the bread of charity from a duke's hand. Therefore his writing degenerated, though perhaps not from an æsthetic or subordinate point of view. But his hatred of tyrants is everywhere manifest. It declares itself against Philip II of Spain, Dorea of Genoa, Gessler of Austria, but therefore ceases to be effective. Schiller's rebellion which was in the first instance

directed against society, was afterwards directed against the monarchy alone. He closes his career with the following advice to a world reformer (not, however, till he had seen the reaction which followed the French Revolution). "For rain and dew and for the welfare of mankind, let heaven care to-day, my friend, as it has always done." Heaven, the unfortunate old heaven will care for it, just as well as it has done before.

Just as a man once does his militia duty at the age of twenty-one, so Schiller did his. How many have shirked it !

John did not take the preface to "The Robbers" very seriously or rather ignored it; but he took Karl Moor literally for he was congenial. He did not imitate him, for he was so like him that he had no need to do so. He was just as mutinous, just as wavering, and just as ready at an alarm to go and deliver himself into the hands of justice.

His disgust at everything continually increased and he began to make plans for flight from organised society. Once it occurred to him to journey to Algiers and enlist in the Foreign Legion. That would be fine he thought to live in the desert in a tent, to shoot at half-wild men or perhaps be shot by them. But circumstances occurred at the right moment to reconcile him again with his environment. Through the recommendation of a friend he was offered the post of tutor to two girls in a rich and cultured family. The children were to be educated in a new and liberal-minded method and neither to go to a girls' school nor have a

governess. That was an important task to which he was called and John did not feel himself adequate to it ; besides which he objected that he was only an elementary school-teacher. He was answered that his future employers knew that, but were liberal-minded. How liberal-minded people were at that time !

Now there commenced a new double life for him. From the penal institution of the elementary school with its compulsory catechism and Bible, its poverty, wretchedness, and cruelty, he went to dinner at one o'clock, which he swallowed in a quarter of an hour, and then by two o'clock was at his post as private tutor. The house was one of the finest at that time in Stockholm with a porter, Pompeian stair-cases and painted windows in the hall. In a handsome, large, well-lighted corner room with flowers, bird-cages and an aquarium he was to give lessons to two well-dressed, washed and combed little girls, who looked cheerful and satisfied after their dinner. Here he could give expression to his own thoughts. The catechism was banished, and only select Bible stories were to be read together with broad-minded explanations of the life and teachings of the Ideal Man, for the children were not to be confirmed, but brought up after a new model. They read Schiller and were enthusiastic for William Tell and the fortunate little land of freedom. John taught them all that he knew and spent more time in talking than in asking questions ; he roused in them the hopes of a better future which he shared himself.

Here he obtained an insight into a social circle hitherto unknown to him, that of the rich and cultured. Here he found liberal-mindedness, courage and the desire for truth. Down below in the elementary school they were cowardly, conservative and untruthful. Would the parents of the children be willing to have religious teaching done away with, even if the school authorities recommended it ? Probably not. Must then illumination come from the upper classes ? Certainly, though not from the highest class of all, but from the republic of truth-seeking scientists. John saw that one must get an upper place in order to be heard ; therefore he must strive upwards or pull culture down and cast the sparks of it among all. One needed to be economically independent in order to be liberally minded ; a position was necessary in order to give one's words weight ; thus aristocracy ruled in this sphere also.

There was at that time a group of young doctors, men of science and letters, and members of parliament who formed a liberal league without constituting themselves a formal society. They gave popular lectures, engaged not to receive any honorary decorations, cherished liberal views on the subject of the State Church and wrote in the papers. Among them were Axel Key, Nordenskiöld, Christian Loven, Harald Wieselgren, Hedlund, Victor Rydberg, Meijerberg, Jolin, and many less-known names. These, with one or two exceptions, worked quietly without creating excitement. After the reaction of 1872 they fell off and became tired ; they could

not join any political party which was rather an advantage than otherwise for the country party had already begun to be corrupted by yearly visiting Stockholm and attendance at the court. They now all belong to the moderate or respectable liberal party, except those of them who have joined the indifferents, a fact not to be wondered at, after they had for so many years fought uselessly for nothing.

Through the family of his pupils John came into external touch with this group, obtained a closer view of them, and heard their speeches at dinners and suppers. To John they sometimes seemed the very men whom the time needed, who would first spread enlightenment and then work for reform. Here he met the superintendent of the elementary school and was surprised at finding him among the liberals. But he had the school authorities over him and was as good as powerless. At a cheerful dinner, when John had plucked up heart, he wished to have an intimate talk with him and to come to an understanding. "Here," he thought, "we can play the part of augurs and laugh with each other over our champagne." But the superintendent did not want to laugh and asked him to postpone the conversation till they met in the school. No, John did not want to do that, for in the school both would have other views, and speak of something else.

John's debts increased and so did his work. He was in the school from eight till one; then he ate his dinner and went to give his private lessons within half-an-hour, arriving out of breath, with food half digested, and sleepy; then he taught till four o'clock

going out afterwards to give more lessons in the Nordtullsgata ; he returned to his girl pupils in the evening, and then read far into the night for his examination after ten hours' teaching. That was over-work. The pupil thinks his work hard, but he is only the carriage while the teacher is the horse. Teaching is decidedly harder than standing by a screw or the crane of a machine, and equally monotonous.

His brain, dulled by work and disturbed digestion, needed to be roused, and his strength needed replenishing. He chose the shortest and best method by going into a café, drinking a glass of wine, and sitting for a while. It was good that there were such places of recreation, where young men could meet and fathers of families recruit themselves over a newspaper and talk of something else than business.

The following summer he went out to a summer settlement outside the city. There he read daily for a couple of hours with his girl pupils and a whole number of children besides them. The summer settlement afforded rich and varied opportunities of social intercourse. It was divided into three camps,—the learned, the æsthetic and the civic. John belonged to all three. It has been asserted that loneliness injures the development of character (into an automaton), and it has been also asserted that much social intercourse is bad for the development of character. Everything can be said and can be true ; it all depends upon the point of view. But no doubt for the development of the soul into a

rich and free life much social intercourse is necessary. The more men one sees and talks with, the more points of view and experiences one gains. Every one conceals a grain of originality in himself, every individual has his own history. John got on equally well with all; he spoke on learned matters with the learned, discussed art and literature with the æsthetes, sang quartettes and danced with the young people, taught the children and botanised, sailed, rode and swam with them. But after he had spent some time in the rush, he withdrew into solitude for a day or two to digest his impressions. Those who were really happy were the townsmen. They came from their work in the town, shook off their cares and played in the evening. Old wholesale merchants played in the ring and sang and danced like children. The learned and the æsthetic on the other hand sat on chairs, spoke of their work, were worried by their thoughts as by nightmares and never seemed to be really happy. They could not free themselves from the tyranny of thought. The tradesmen, however, had preserved a little green spot in their hearts which neither the thirst for gain nor speculation nor competition had been able to parch up. There was something emotional and hearty about them which John was inclined to call "nature." They could laugh like lunatics, scream like savages, and be swayed by the emotions of the moment. They wept over a friend's misfortune or death, embraced each other when delighted and could be carried out of themselves by a beautiful sunset. The professors sat in chairs and could not

see the landscape because of their eye-glasses, their looks were directed inwards, and they never showed their feelings. They talked in syllogisms and formulas; their laughter was bitter, and all their learning seemed like a puppet play. Is that then the highest point of view? It is not a defect to have let a whole region of the soul's life lie fallow?

It was the third camp with which John was on the most intimate terms. This was a little clique consisting of a doctor's family and their friends. There sang the renowned tenor W. while Professor M. accompanied him; there played and sang the composer J.; there the old Professor P. talked about his journeys to Rome in the company of painters of high birth. Here the emotions had full play, but were under the control of good taste. They enjoyed the sunsets, but analysed the lights and shades and talked of lines and "values." The more noisy enjoyments of the tradesmen were regarded as disturbing and unesthetic. They were enthusiasts for art. John spent some hours pleasantly with these amiable people, but when he heard the sound of quartette singing and dance-music from the villa close by, he longed to be there. That was certainly more lively.

In hours of solitude he read, and now for the first time, became really acquainted with Byron. "Don Juan," which he already knew, he had found merely frivolous. It really dealt with nothing and the descriptions of scenery were intolerably long. The work seemed merely a string of adventures and anecdotes. In "Manfred" he renewed

acquaintance with Karl Moor in another dress. Manfred was no hater of men; he hated himself more, and went to the Alps in order to fly himself, but always found his guilty self beside him, for John guessed at once that he had been guilty of incest. Nowadays it is generally believed that Byron hinted at this crime, which was purely imaginary, in order to make himself appear interesting. To become interesting as a romanticist at whatever price would at the present time be called "differentiating oneself, going beyond and above the others." Crime was regarded as a sign of strength, therefore it was considered desirable to have a crime to boast about, but not such a one as could be punished. They did not want to have anything to do with the police and penal servitude. There was certainly a spirit of opposition to law and morality in this boasting of crime.

Manfred's discontent with heaven and the government of Providence pleased John. Manfred's denunciations of men were really levelled at society, though society as we now understand it, had not then been discovered. Rousseau, Byron and the rest were by no means discontented misogynists. It was only primitive Christianity which demanded that men should love men. To say that one was interested in them would be more modest and truthful. One who has been overreached and thrust aside in the battle of life may well fear men, but one cannot hate them when one realises one's solidarity with humanity and that human intercourse is the greatest pleasure in life. Byron was

a spirit who awoke before the others and might have been expected to hate his contemporaries, but none the less strove and suffered for the good of all.

When John saw that the poem was written in blank verse he tried to translate it, but had not got far, before he discovered that he could not write verse. He was not "called." Sometimes melancholy, sometimes frisky, John felt at times an uncontrollable desire to quench the burning fire of thought in intoxication and bring the working of his brain to a standstill. Though he was shy, he felt occasionally impelled to step forward, to make himself impressive, to collect hearers and appear on a stage. When he had drunk a good deal, he wanted to declaim poetry in the grand style. But in the middle of the piece, when his ecstasy was at its highest, he heard his own voice, became nervous and embarrassed, found himself ridiculous, suddenly dropped into a prosaic and comic tone and ended with a grimace; he could be pathetic, but only for a while; then came self-criticism and he laughed at his own overwrought feelings. The romantic was in his blood, but the realistic side of him was about to wake up.

He was also liable to attacks of caprice and self-punishment. Thus he remained away from a dinner to which he had been invited and lay in his room hungry till the evening. He excused himself by saying that he had overslept.

The summer approached its end and he looked forward to the beginning of the autumn term in the elementary school with dread. He had now

been in circles where poverty never showed its emaciated face ; he had tasted the enticing wine of culture and did not wish to become sober again.

His depression increased ; he retired into himself and withdrew from the circle of his friends. But one evening, there was a knock at his door ; the old doctor who had been his most intimate friend and lived in the same villa, stepped in.

“ How are the moods ? ” he asked, and sat down with the air of an old fatherly friend.

John did not wish to confess. How was he to say that he was discontented with his position, and acknowledge that he was ambitious and wished to advance in life ? But the doctor had seen and understood all. “ You must be a doctor,” he said. “ That is a practical vocation which will suit you, and bring you into touch with real life. You have a lively imagination which you must hold in check, or it will do harm. Now are you inclined to this ? Have I guessed right ? ”

He had. Through his intercourse from afar with these new prophets who succeeded the priests and confessors, John had come to see in their practical knowledge of men’s lives, the highest pitch of human wisdom. To become a wise man who could solve the riddles of life,—that was for a while his dream. For a while, for he did not really wish to enter any career in which he could be enrolled as a regular member of society. It was not from dislike of work, for he worked strenuously and was ~~not~~ unhappy when unoccupied, but he had a strong objection to be enrolled. He did not wish to be a cypher, a cog-

wheel, or a screw in the social machine. He wished to stand outside and contemplate, learn and preach. A doctor was in a certain sense free ; he was not an official, had no superiors, set in no public office, was not tied by the clock. That was a fairly enticing prospect, and John was enticed. But how was he to take a medical degree, which required eight years' study ? His friend, however, had seen a way out of this difficulty. "Live with us and teach my boys," he said.

This was certainly a business-like offer which carried with it no sense of accepting a humiliating favour. But what about his place in the school ? Should he give it up ?

"That is not your place !" the doctor cut him short. "Every one should work where his talents can have free scope, and yours cannot in the elementary school, where you have to teach, as prescribed by the school authorities."

John found this reasonable, but he had been so imbued with ascetic teaching that he felt a pang of conscience. He wanted to leave the school, but a strange feeling of duty and obligation held him back. He felt quite ashamed of being suspected of such a natural weakness as ambition. And his place, as the son of a servant, had been assigned to him below. But his father had literally pulled him up, why should he sink and strike his roots down there again ?

He fought a short bloody conflict, then accepted the offer thankfully, and sent in his resignation as a school-teacher.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DOCTOR

(1868)

JOHN now found his new home with the homeless, the Israelites. He was immediately surrounded by a new atmosphere. Here there was no recollection of Christianity; one neither plagued oneself or others; there was no grace at meals, no going to church, no catechism.

"It is good to be here," thought John. "These are liberal-minded men who have brought the best of foreign culture home, without being obliged to take what is bad. Here for the first time, he encountered foreign influences. The family had journeyed much, had relatives abroad, spoke all languages, and received foreign guests. Both the small and great affairs of the country were spoken about, and light thrown on them by comparison with their originals abroad. By this means John's mental horizon was widened and he was enabled to estimate his native country better.

The patriarchal constitution of the family had not assumed the form of domestic tyranny. On the contrary the children treated their parents more as their equals, and the parents were gentle with them without losing their dignity. Placed

in an unfriendly part of the world, surrounded by half-enemies, the members of the family helped each other and held together. To be without a native country, which is regarded as such a hardship, has this advantage that it keeps the intelligence alive and vigorous. Men who are wanderers have to watch unceasingly, observe continually, and gain new and rich experiences, while those who sit at home become lazy and lean upon others.

The children of Israel occupy a peculiar and exceptional position from a social point of view. They have forgotten the Messianic promise and do not believe in it. In most European countries they have remained among the middle classes; to join the lower classes was for the most part denied them, though not so widely as is generally believed. Nor could they join the upper classes; therefore they feel related to neither of the latter. They are aristocrats from habit and inclination, but have the same interests as the lower classes, *i. e.* they wish to roll away the stone which lies upon and presses them. But they fear the proletariat who have no religious sense and who do not love the rich. Therefore the children of Abraham rather aspire to those above them, than seek sympathy from those below.

About this time (1868) the question of Jewish emancipation began to be raised. All liberals supported it and it was practically a discarding of Christianity. Baptism, ecclesiastical marriage, confirmation, church attendance were all declared to be unnecessary conditions for membership in a

Christian community. Such apparently small reforms make an impression on the state, like the dropping of water on a rock.

At that time a cheerful tone prevailed in the family, the sons having a brighter future in prospect than their fathers, whose academic course had been hindered by State regulations.

A liberal table was kept in the house ; everything was of the best quality, and there was plenty of it. The servants managed the house and were allowed a free hand in everything ; they were not regarded as servants. The housemaid was a pietist and allowed to be so, as much as she pleased. She was good-natured and humorous, and, illogically enough, adopted the jesting tone of the cheerful paganism which reigned in the house. On the other hand, no one laughed at her belief. John himself was treated as an intimate friend and a child alternately and lived with the boys. His work was easy and he was rather required to keep the boys company than to give them lessons. Meanwhile he became somewhat "spoiled" as people, who have the usual idea of keeping youth in the background, call it. Though only nineteen, he was received on an equal footing among well-known and mature artists, doctors, *littérateurs* and officials. He became accustomed to regard himself as grown up, and therefore the set-backs he encountered afterwards, were the harder to bear.

His medical career began with chemical experiments in the technological institute. There he obtained a closer view of some of the glories he had

dreamed of in his childhood. But how dry and tedious were the rudiments of science ! To stand and pour acids on salts and to watch the solution change colour, was not pleasant ; to produce salts from two or more solutions was not very interesting. But later on, when the time came for analysis, the mysterious part began. To fill a glass about the size of a punch-bowl with a liquid as clear as water and then to exhibit in the filter the possibly twenty elements it contained,—this really seemed like penetrating into nature's secrets. When he was alone in the laboratory he made small experiments on his own account, and it was not long before with some danger he had prepared a little phial of prussic acid. To have death enclosed in a few drops under a glass stopper was a curiously pleasant feeling.

At the same time he studied zoology, anatomy, botany, physic and Latin,—still more Latin ! To read and master a subject was congenial to him, but to learn by heart he hated. His head was already filled with so many subjects, that it was hard for anything more to enter, but it was obliged to.

A worse drawback was that so many other interests began to vie in his mind with his medical studies. The theatre was only a stone's throw from the doctor's house and he went there twice a week. He had a standing place at the end of the third row. From thence he saw elegant and cheerful French comedies played on a Brussels carpet. The light Gallic humour, admired by the melancholy Swedes as their missing complement, completely captivated him. What a mental equilibrium, what a power

of resistance to the blows of fate were possessed by this race of a southern sunnier land! His thoughts became still more gloomy as he grew conscious of his Germanic "Weltschmerz" lying like a veil over everything, which a hundred years of French education could not have lifted. But he did not know that Parisian theatrical life differs widely from that of the industrious and thrifty Parisian at the desk and the counter. French comedies were written for the parvenus of the Second Empire; politics and religion were subject to the censor, but not morals. French comedy was aristocratic in tone, but had a liberating effect on the mind as it was in touch with reality, though it did not interfere in social questions. It accustomed the public to sympathise with and feel at home in this superfine world; one came to forget the lower everyday world, and when one left the theatre it felt as though one had been at supper with a friendly duke.

As chance fell out, the doctor's wife possessed a good library in which all the best literature of the world was represented. It was indeed a treasure to have all these at one's elbow! Moreover the doctor possessed a number of pictures by Swedish masters and a valuable collection of engravings. There was an efflorescence of æstheticism on all sides, even in the schools, where lectures on literature were delivered. The conversation in the family circle mostly turned on pictures, dramas, actors, books, authors, and the doctor felt from time to time impelled to flavour it with details of his practice.

Now and then John began to read the papers. Political and social life with their various questions opened up before him, but at first with a repelling effect, as he was an aethete and domestic egoist. Politics did not seem to touch him at all; he considered it a special branch of knowledge like any other.

He continued his lessons to the girls and his intercourse with their family. Outside the house he met grown up relatives, who were tradesmen, and their acquaintances. His circle was therefore widened, and he saw life from more than one point of view. But this constant occupation with children had a hampering effect on his development. He never felt himself older, and he could not treat the young with an air of superiority. He already noticed that they were in advance of him, that they were born with new thoughts, and that they built on, where he had ceased. When later on in life, he met grown-up pupils, he looked up to them as though they were the older.

The autumn of 1868 had commenced. There had been so much miscalculation as to the effects of the new State constitution that there was widespread discontent. Society was turned topsy-turvy. The peasant threatened the civilised town-dwellers and there was a general feeling of bitterness.

Has the last word regarding the agrarian party yet been said? Probably not. It began with a democratic and reforming programme and its attack on the Civil List was the boldest stroke which had yet been seen. It was a legal attempt

to overthrow the monarchy. If the vote of supply was screwed down to the lowest possible, the king would go. It was a simple and at the same time a clever stroke.

At a period which proclaims the right of the majority, one would not have expected the peasants' cause would encounter resistance. Sweden was a kingdom of peasants, for the country population numbered four millions, which in a population of four and a half millions, is certainly the majority. Should then the half million rule the four or vice versa ? The latter course seemed the fairer. Now naturally the townsmen talk of the egotism and tyranny of the peasants, but have the labour party in the town a single item in their programme to improve the condition of the peasants and cottagers ? It is so stupid to talk of egotism when every one now sees that he profits the whole, in proportion as he profits himself.

Meanwhile, in 1868, the malcontents discovered a party which could be opposed to the constitutional majority and whose programme contained all kinds of thorough-going reforms. That was the new liberal party, consisting for the most part of authors, some artisans, a professor, etc. By means of this handful of people who had none of the weighty interests which landed property involves, and whose social position was so insecure that a single unfavourable harvest could turn them into members of the proletariat, it was proposed to remodel society. What did the artisans know about society ? How did they wish it to be constituted ? Did they wish

it to be remodelled in their interest, although the peasantry should be ruined ? But that meant cutting off their own legs, for Sweden is not a land of exporting industries. Therefore the four million consumers in the land, as soon as their purchasing power was diminished, would involuntarily ruin the industries and leave the artisans stranded. That the artisans should advance is a necessity, but to wish to make all men industrial workers as the industrial socialists do, is much more unreasonable than to make them all peasants as the agrarian socialists purpose doing. Capital, which the labour party now attack, is the foundation of industry and if that is touched, industry is overthrown, and then the workmen must go back whence they came and still daily come,—to the country.

Meanwhile, the agrarian party was not yet corrupted by intercourse with aristocrats ; it was neither conservative nor did it make compromises. The war seemed to be between the country and the town. The atmosphere was electric and the smallest cause might produce a thunderstorm.

In the capital there prevailed a general desire to erect a statue to Charles XII. Why ? Was this last knight of the Middle Ages the ideal of the age ? Did the character of the idol of Gustav IV, Adolf, and Charles XV suitably express the spirit of the new peaceful period which now commenced ? Or did the idea originate, as so often is the case in the sculptor's studio ? Who knows ? The statue was ready and the unveiling was to take place. Stands were erected for the spectators, but so un-

skilfully that the ceremony could not be witnessed by the general public, and the space railed off could only contain the invited guests, the singers and those who paid for their seats. But the subscription had been national and all believed they had a right to see. The arrangements were obnoxious to the people. Petitions were made to have the stands removed, but without success. The crowd began to make attempts to tear them down, but the military intervened. The doctor that day was giving a dinner to the Italian Opera Company. They had just risen from dessert when a noise was heard from the street ; it was at first like rain falling on an iron roof, but then cries were distinctly audible. John listened, but for the moment nothing more was to be heard. The wine-glasses clinked amid Italian and French phrases which flew hither and thither over the table ; there was such a noise of jests and laughter that those at the table could hardly hear themselves speak. But now there came a roar from the street, followed immediately by the tramp of horses, the rattle of weapons and harness. There was silence in the room for a moment, and one and another turned pale.

“ What is it ? ” asked the prima donna.

“ The mob making a noise,” answered a professor.

John stood up from the table, went into his room, took his hat and stick and hurried out. “ The mob ! ”—the words rang in his ear while he went down the street. “ The mob ! ” They were his mother’s former associates, his own school-mates and afterwards his pupils ; they formed the dark

background against which the society he had just quitted, stood out like a brilliant picture. He felt again as though he were a deserter, and had done wrong in working his way up. But he must get above if he was to do anything for those below. Yes many had said that, but when once they did get above, they found it so pleasant, that they forgot those below. These cavalrymen, for instance, whose origin was of the humblest, what airs they gave themselves ! With what unmixed pleasure they cut down their former comrades, though it must be confessed they would have even more enjoyed cutting down the "black hats."

He went on and came to the market-place. The stands for the spectators stood out against the November sky like gigantic market booths, and the space below swarmed with men. From the opening of the Arsenal street the tramp of horses was heard only a short way off. Then they came riding forth, the blue guardsmen, the support of society, on whom the upper class relied. John was seized with a wild desire to dash against this mass of horses, men and sabres, as though he saw in them oppression incarnate. That was the enemy ! very well—at them ! The troop rode on and John stationed himself in the middle of the street. Whence had he derived this hatred against the supporters of law and order, who some day would protect him and his rights after he had clambered up, and was in a position to oppress others ? If the mob with whom he now felt his solidarity had had their

hands free, they would probably have thrown the first stone through the window, behind which he had sat with four wine-glasses in front of him. Certainly, but that did not prevent his taking their side just as the upper class often, inconsistently enough, takes sides against the police. This mania for freedom in the abstract is probably the natural man's small revolt against society.

He was going against the cavalry with a vague idea of striking them all to the ground or something of the sort, when fortunately some one seized him by the arm firmly but in a friendly way. He was brought back to the doctor's who had sent out to seek for him. After he had given his word of honour not to go out again he sank on a sofa, and lay all the evening in fever.

On the day of the unveiling of Charles XII's statue, he was one of the student singers, therefore among the elect, the "upper ten thousand," and had no reason to be discontented with his lot. When the ceremony was over, the people rushed forward. The police forced them back, and then they began to throw stones. The mounted police drew their sabres and struck, arresting some and assaulting others.

John had entered the market in front of the Jakob's church when he saw a policeman lay hold of a man, under a shower of stones which knocked off the constables' helmets. Without hesitation he sprang on the policeman, seized him by the collar, shook him and shouted, "Let the fellow go!"

The policeman looked at his assailant in astonishment.

"Who are you?" he asked irresolutely.

"I am Satan, and I will take you, if you don't let him go."

He actually did let him go and tried to seize John. At the same instant a stone knocked off his three-cornered hat. John tore himself loose; the crowd were now driven back by bayonets towards the guard-house in the Gustaf Adolf market. After them followed a swarm of well-dressed men, obviously members of the upper classes, shouting wildly, and as it seemed, resolved to free the prisoners. John ran with them; it was as though they were all impelled by a storm-wind. Men who had not been molested or oppressed at all, who had high positions in society, rushed blindly forward, risking their position, their domestic happiness, their living, everything. John felt a hand grasp his. He returned the pressure, and saw close beside him a middle-aged man, well-dressed, with distorted features. They did not know each other, nor did they speak together, but ran hand in hand, as if seized by one impulse. They came across a third in whom John recognised an old school-fellow, subsequently a civil service official, son of the head of a department. This young man had never sided with the opposition party in school, but on the contrary, was looked upon as a re-actionary with a future in front of him. He was now as white as a corpse, his cheeks were bloodless, the muscles of his forehead

swollen, and his face resembled a skull in which two eyes were burning. They could not speak, but took each other's hands and ran on against the guards whom they were attacking. The human waves advanced till they were met by the bayonets, and then as always, dispersed in foam. Half-an-hour later John was discussing a beefsteak with some students in the Opera restaurant. He spoke of his adventure as though it were something which had happened independently of him and his will. Nay, he even jested at it. That may have been fear of public opinion, but also it may have been the case that he regarded his outbreak objectively and now quietly judged it as a member of society. The trap-door had opened for a moment, the prisoner had put his head out, and then it had closed again.

His unknown fellow-criminal, as he discovered later, was a pronounced conservative, a wholesale tradesman. He always avoided meeting John's eye, when they met after this. One time they met on a narrow pavement, and had to look at each other, but did not smile.

While they were sitting in the restaurant, came the news of the death of Blanche. The students took it fairly coolly, the artists and middle class citizens more warmly, but the lower classes talked of murder. They knew that he had personally besought Charles XV to have the spectators' stands taken down; they knew also, that though he was very prosperous himself, he had always thought of them and they were thankful. Stupid people objected, as is usual

in such cases, that it required no great skill on his part to speak on behalf of the poor, when he was rich and celebrated. Did it not? It required the greatest.

It is remarkable that the chief outbreak of discontent was directed, not as elsewhere against the King, but against the governor and the police. Charles XV was a *persona grata*; he could do as he liked without becoming unpopular. He was neither condescending nor democratic in his tastes, but rather proud. Stories were told of some of his favourites having fallen into disgrace for want of respect on some mirthful occasion. He could put tobacco into his soldiers' mouths, but he scolded officers who did not at once fall in with his moods. He could box people's ears at a fire, and did not laugh when he was caricatured in a comic paper, as was supposed. He was a ruler and believed he was also a warrior and a statesman; he interfered in the government and could snub specialists with a "You don't understand that!" But he was popular and remained so. Swedes, who do not like to see a man's will slackening, admired this will and bowed before it. It was also strange, that they forgave his irregular life; perhaps it was because he made no secret of it. He had laid down a standard of morality for himself and lived according to it. Therefore he lived at harmony with himself, and harmony is always pleasant to contemplate.

People might be revolters by instinct, but they did not believe in the transition form to a better

social constitution, *i. e.* a republic. They had seen how two French republics had been followed by new monarchies. There were secret anarchists, but no republicans, and they had persuaded themselves that the monarchy offered no barrier to the progress of liberty.

These were the ideas of the younger men. The elder men with Blanche thought a republic the only means of social salvation and therefore in our days the old liberal school has become conservative-republican.

When the doctor saw that his wife's literary books threatened to encroach upon John's medical studies, he resolved to give him a glimpse into the secrets of his profession, and to allow him such a foretaste of real work as should entice him to overcome the tedious preliminary studies which he himself thought too extensive. John now knew more chemistry and physics than the doctor, and the latter thought it was merely malicious to hinder a rival's course by imposing too hard preliminary studies. Why should he not, as in America, commence dissection, which was a special branch of study? Now after the theoretical study of anatomy, he could begin practice as an assistant. That was a new life full of variety and reality. One went for instance into a dark alley and came into a porter's room, where a woman lay, sick of fever, surrounded by poor children, the grandmother and other relations, who stole about on tip-toe, awaiting the

doctor's verdict. The malodorous ragged bed-cover would be lifted, a sunken heaving chest exposed to view, and a prescription written. Then one went to the *Tvärdgårdsgatan* and was conducted over soft carpets through splendid rooms into a bed-chamber which looked like a temple; one lifted a blue silk coverlet and put in splints the leg of an angelic-looking child, dressed in lace. On the way out one looked at a collection of paintings, and talked about artists. This was something novel and interesting, but what connection had it with *Titus Livius* and the history of philosophy?

But then came the details of surgery. One was roused at seven o'clock in the morning, came into the doctor's dark room, and manually assisted at the cauterising of a syphilitic sore. The room reeked of human flesh, and was repugnant to an empty stomach. Or he had to hold a patient's head and felt it twitch with pain while the doctor with a fork extracted glands from his throat.

"One soon gets accustomed to that," said the doctor, and that was true, but John's thoughts were busy with *Goethe's Faust*, *Wieland's Epicurean romances*, *George Sand's social phantasies*, *Chateaubriand's soliloquies with nature*, and *Lessing's common-sense theories*. His imagination was set in motion and his memory refused to work; the reality of cauterisations and flowing blood was ugly; æstheticism had laid hold of him, and actual life seemed to him tedious and repulsive. His intercourse with artists had opened his eyes to a new

world, a free society within Society. They would come to a well-spread table where cultivated people were sitting with badly-fitting clothes, black nails, and dirty linen, as if they were not merely equal, but superior to the rest,—in what?

They could scarcely write their names, they borrowed money without repaying it, and their talk was coarse. Everything was permitted to them, which was not permitted to others. Why? They could paint. They studied at the Academy, and the Academy did not ask whether all who enrolled themselves as students were geniuses. How was it known that they were geniuses? Was painting greater than knowledge and science?

They also had, as was well recognised, a peculiar morality of their own. They opened studios, hired models, and boasted of their paramours, while other men were ashamed of theirs and incurred disapproval on account of them. They laughed at what were very serious matters for other men, nay, it seemed to be part of an artist's equipment to be a "scoundrel," as any one else would be called for similar conduct.

"That was a glad free world," thought John, and one in which he could thrive, without conventional fetters or social obligations, and above all, without contact with banal realities. But he was not a genius? How should he get the entrée to it? Should he learn to paint and so be initiated? No! that would not do; he had never thought of painting; that demanded a special vocation, he thought, and painting would not express all he had to say, when

once he began to speak. If he *had* to find a medium for self-expression it would be the theatre. An actor could step forward, and say all kinds of truths, however bitter they might be, without being brought to book for them. That was certainly a tempting career.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN FRONT OF THE CURTAIN

(1869)

JOHN's proposal to transfer the university from Upsala to Stockholm was destined to have consequences, and his comrades had warned him of them. When he went up early in spring in order to write the obligatory Latin essay he had sent the professor by post the three test-essays and the 15 ,krona fee. So he could carry out his purpose unhindered and enrolled himself.

But now in May he wished to go and pass the preliminary examination in chemistry. In order to be well prepared, he had himself tested by the assistant-professor at the technological institute. The latter did so and declared that he already knew more than was needed for the medical examination. Thus prepared, he went up to Upsala. His first visit was to a comrade, who had already passed the preliminary examination in chemistry, and knew the "tips" for it.

John began : "I can do synthesis and analysis, and have studied organic chemistry."

"That is very well, for we only need synthesis ;

however, it is no use for you have not studied in the professor's laboratory."

"That is true; but the course at the Institute is much better."

"No matter,—it is not his."

"We shall see," said John, "whether knowledge does not tell in any case."

"If you are so sure, then try, but consider first what I say. You must first go to the assistant-professor and get a 'tip'."

"What do you mean?"

"For a krona he will give you an hour's polishing, and ask you all the important questions which the professor has put during the past year. Just now he is in the habit of asking whether matches can be made out of his carcase and ammonia from your old boots. But that you will learn from the assistant. Secondly, you must not go to be examined in a frock coat and white tie; least of all, dressed as well as you are now. Therefore you must borrow my riding-coat, which is green in the shoulders and red in the seams, and my top-boots, for he does not like elastic boots. John followed his friend's instructions and went first to the assistant-professor who gave him the questions which had been last asked. In return John promised that under all circumstances he would return and tell him the questions which he himself had been asked, as a means of enlarging his catechism.

The next day John went to his friend to array himself. His trousers were drawn up so that the tops of the boots should be seen and his loose collar

turned on one side, so that the skin should show between the tie and the collar. Thus equipped, he went up for his first trial.

The professor of chemistry had formerly been a fortification officer, and had received in his time a not very cordial welcome from the learned staff in Upsala. He was a soldier, not academically cultivated, and thus a kind of "Philistine." This had galled him and made him bilious. In order to efface the effect of his laymen-like exterior, he affected the airs of an over-read and blunt professor. He went about ill-dressed and behaved eccentrically. Though many hundreds besides himself had been pupils of Berzelius, he was fond of mentioning the fact; it was his trump card. Berzelius, among other things, went about in shabby trousers, therefore a hole in one's clothes was the sign of a learned chemist, and so on. Hence all these peculiarities.

John presented himself, was regarded with suspicion and bidden to come again in a week. He replied that he had come from Stockholm and was too poor to support himself for a week in the town. He managed to get permission to present himself the next day. "It would be soon over," said the old man.

The next day he sat on a seat opposite the professor. It was a sunny afternoon in May, and the old man seemed to have digested his dinner badly. He looked grim as he threw out his first question from his rocking-chair. The answers were correct at the beginning. Then the questions became more tortuous like snakes.

“ If I have an estate, where I suspect the presence of saltpetre, how shall I begin to construct a saltpetre factory ? ”

John suggested a saltpetre analysis.

“ No.”

“ Well, then, I don’t know anything else.”

There was silence and the flies buzzed,—a long and terrible silence. “ Now will come the question about the boots or the matches,” thought John, “ and there I shall shine.” He coughed by way of rousing the professor, but the silence continued. John wondered whether he had been seen through and whether the old man recognised the “ examination coat.”

Then came a new question which was unanswered, and then another.

“ You have come too soon,” said the old man, and rose up.

“ Yes, but I have worked a whole year in the laboratory, and can do chemical analysis.”

“ Yes, you know how to make up prescriptions, but you have not digested your knowledge. In the Institute only manual dexterity is necessary, but here scientific knowledge is required.”

As a matter of fact the case was exactly the reverse for the medical students in Upsala complained that they had to stand like cooks and make up mixtures and salts, without having time to look at an analysis, which last was just what a doctor ought to do while synthesis was the apothecary’s work. But now the proposal made some years before whether the university had not better be transferred to

Stockholm had roused a feeling in Upsala against the capital. Moreover the laboratory of the newly-built technological institute was as famous for its excellent equipment, as that of Upsala was notorious for its poor one. Here, therefore, petty prejudices were at work and John felt the unfairness of it. "I do not then get a certificate?" he asked.

"No, sir, not this year; but come again next year."

The professor was ashamed to say, "Go to my only soul-saving laboratory."

John went out furious. Here then again neither diligence nor knowledge prevailed, but only cash and cringing! Had he tried short cuts? No, on the contrary, he had been obliged to travel by painful circuitous paths, while others had gone the direct road, and the directest is the shortest.

He went to the Carolina Park, as angry as an irritated bee. He did not wish to return at once to the town, but sat down on a seat. If he could only set this devil's hole on fire! Another year? No, never! Why read so much unnecessary stuff, which would only be forgotten, and be of no practical use? And slave in order to enter this dirty profession where one had to analyse urine, pick about in vomit, poke about in all the recesses of the body? Faugh! Just as he was sitting there, a group of cheerful-looking people came by, and stood laughing outside the Carolina library. They looked up to the windows, through which long rows of books were visible, shelf after shelf. They laughed,—the men and women laughed at the books. He thought

he recognised them. Yes, they were Levasseur's French actors, whom he had seen in Stockholm and who were now visiting Upsala. They laughed at the books ! Lucky people who could be importers of genius and culture without books. Perhaps every soul had something to give which was not in books, but would be there some day. Yes, certainly it was so. He himself possessed stories of experience and thoughts, which could enrich anthropology, and were ready to be thrown out.

Again there stole upon him the thought of entering this privileged profession, which stood outside and above petty social conventions which ignored distinctions of rank, and in which one need never be conscious of belonging to the lower classes. There one could appeal to the universal judgment, and work in full publicity instead of being hung up here in a remote dark hole, without a verdict, examination, or witnesses.

Strengthened by this new idea, he stood up, cast a glance at the books above, and went down to the town resolved to go home and seek for an engagement in the Theatre Royal.

Every townsman has probably felt once in his life the wish to appear as an actor. This is probably due to the impulse of the cultivated man to magnify and make himself something, to identify himself with great and celebrated personalities. John, who was a romanticist, had also the desire to step forward and harangue the public. He believed that he could choose his proper rôle, and he knew beforehand which it would be. The fact that he, like all

others, believed that he had the capacity to become an actor, sprang from the superfluity of unused force, produced by a want of sufficient physical exercise, and from the tendency to megalomania connected with mental over-exertion. He saw no difficulties in the profession itself, but expected opposition from another quarter.

To attribute his being stage-struck to hereditary tendencies would perhaps be hasty, since we have just remarked that it is an almost universal impulse. But his paternal grandfather, a Stockholm citizen, had written dramatic pieces for an amateur theatre, and a young distant relative still lived as a warning example. The latter had been an engineer, had been through a course of instruction in the Motala iron-works, and had a post on the Köping-Hult railway. He therefore had fine prospects in front of him, but suddenly threw them up, and became an actor. This step of his was an incessant trouble to his family. Up to this time the young man had become nothing but was still travelling about with an obscure theatrical company. The danger of becoming like him was the difficult point. "Yes," said John to himself, "but I shall have luck." Why? Because he believed it; and he believed it because he wished it.

Some might be inclined to derive this strong impulse on John's part from the fact that he loved to play, as a child, with a toy theatre, but that is not sufficient, as all children do the same and he had got the taste from seeing them do it. The theatre was an unreal better world which enticed

one out of the tedious real one. The latter would not have seemed so tedious if his education had been more harmonious and realistic and not given him such a strong tendency to romance. Enough; his resolution was taken; and without saying anything to any one, he went to the director of the Theatrical Academy the dramaturgist of the Theatre Royal.

When he heard the sound of his own words "I want to be an actor," he shuddered. He felt as though he tore down the veil of his inborn modesty, and did violence to his own nature.

The director asked what he was doing at present.  
"Studying medicine."

"And you want to give up such a career, for one that is the hardest and the worst of all?"

"Yes."

All actors called their profession the "hardest and the worst" though they had such a good time of it. That was in order to frighten away aspirants.

John asked for private lessons in order that he might make his débüt. The director replied that he was now going to the country for the theatrical season was at an end, but he told John to come again on the 1st of September when the theatre opened, and the board of management came again to the town. That was a definite appointment and he saw his way clear.

When he went down the street, he walked with his eyes wide open, as though he gazed into a brilliant future; victory was already his; he felt its intoxicating power.

cating fumes, and hurried, though with unsteady steps, down the street.

He said nothing to the doctor nor to any one else. He had still three months in front of him in which to train and prepare himself, but in secret, for he was shy and timid. He was afraid of annoying his father and the doctor, afraid of the whole town knowing that he thought himself capable of being an actor, afraid of his relatives' scorn, his friends' grimaces and efforts to dissuade him. This was the fruit of his education, the fear,—“What will people say?” His imagination made the act seem like a crime. It was certainly an interference with other people’s peace of mind for relations and friends feel a shock, when they see a link torn out of the social chain. He felt it himself, and had to shake off the scruples of conscience.

For his début he had chosen the rôles of Karl Moor and Wijkander’s Lucidor. This was no mere chance but perfectly logical. In both of these characters he had found the expression of his inner experience, and therefore he wished to speak with their tongues. He conceived of Lucidor as a higher nature undermined and ruined by poverty. A higher nature of course! In his enthusiasm for the theatre he felt again what he had felt when he had preached, and when he had revolted against the school prayers,<sup>1</sup> something of the proclaiming, the prophet, and the soothsayer.

What most of all elevated his ideas of the great significance of the theatre was the perusal of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide the Son of a Servant.*

Schiller's essay, "The theatre regarded as an instrument of moral education." Sentences like the following show how lofty was the goal at which Schiller aimed. "The stage is the chief channel through which the light of wisdom descends from the better, thinking portion of the populace in order to spread its beneficent light over the whole state." "In this world of art we dream ourselves away from the real one, we find ourselves again, our feelings are roused, wholesome emotions stir our slumbering nature and drive our blood in swift currents. The unhappy here forget their own sorrows in watching those of others, the happy become sober, and the self-confident, reflective. The effeminate weakling is hardened into a man, the coarse and callous here begin to feel. And then finally,—what a triumph for thee O Nature, so often trodden down and so often re-arisen,—when men of all climates and conditions, casting away all fetters of convention and fashion, set free from the iron hand of fate, fraternising in one all-embracing sympathy, dissolved into *one* race, forget themselves and the world, and approach their heavenly origin. Each individual enjoys the delight of all, which is mirrored back to him strengthened and beautified from a hundred eyes, and his breast has only room for one aspiration,—to be a man!"

Thus wrote the young Schiller at twenty-five, and the youth of twenty subscribed it.

The theatre is certainly still a means of culture for young people and the middle class who can

still feel the illusion of actors and painted canvas. For older and cultivated people it is a recreation in which the actor's art is the chief object of attention. Therefore old critics are almost invariably discontent and crabbed. They have lost their illusions and do not pass over any mistake in the acting.

Modern times have overprised the theatre, especially the actor's art in an exaggerated degree, and a re-action has followed. Actors have tried to ply their art independently of the dramatist, believing that they could stand on their own legs. Therefore particular "stars" become the objects of homage and therefore also opposition has been aroused. In Paris, where people had gone to the greatest lengths, a reaction first showed itself. The *Figaro* called the heroes of the Théâtre-Français to order, and reminded them that they were only the author's puppets.

The decay of all the great European theatres shows that the actor's art has lost its interest. Cultivated people no more go to the theatre because their sense for reality has been developed, and their imagination which is a relic of the savage has diminished; the uncultivated lack the time, and the money to go. The future seems to belong to the variety theatre, which amuses without instructing, for it is mere play and recreation. All important writers choose another, more suitable form in which to handle important questions. Ibsen's dramas have always produced their effect in book form before they were played; and when they are played,

the spectators' interest is generally concentrated on the *manner* of their performance; consequently it is a secondary interest.

John committed the usual mistake of youth, *i. e.* of confusing the actor with the author; the actor is the mere enunciator of the sentiments for which the author who stands behind him, is responsible.

In the spring John resigned his post as tutor to the two girls, and now he had leisure during the summer to study his art in secret, and on his own responsibility. He had scoffed at books, and now the first things he sought were books. They contained the thoughts and experiences of men with whom, though most of them were dead, he could converse familiarly, without being betrayed. He had heard that in the castle there was a library which belonged to the State, and from which one could borrow books. He obtained a surety and went there. It was a solemn place with small rooms full of books where grey-haired silent old men sat and read. He got his books and went shyly and happily home.

He wished to study the matter thoroughly in all its aspects, as was his custom. In Schiller he found the assurance that the theatre was of deep significance; in Goethe he found a whole treatise on the histrionic art with directions how one should walk and stand, behave oneself, sit down, come in and go out; in Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* he found a whole volume of theatrical critiques filled with the closest observations. Lessing especially roused his hopes, for he went so far as to declare

that the theatre had come down owing to the inferiority of the actors, and said that it would be better to employ amateurs from the cultivated classes who would play better than the drilled and often uncultured actors. He also read Raymond de St. Albin, whose often quoted observations on the actor's art are of great value.

At the same time he exercised himself practically. At the doctor's he arranged a stage when the boys were out. He practised entrances and exits; he arranged the stage for "The Robbers," dressed himself like Karl Moor, and played that part. He went to the National Museum and studied gestures of antique sculptures and gave up using his walking stick in order to accustom himself to walk freely. He did violence to his shyness, which had almost produced in him "agoraphobia," or the dread of crossing open places, and accustomed himself to walk across Karl XIII's square where great crowds used to be found. He did gymnastics every day at home, and fenced with his pupils. He gave attention to every movement of the muscles; practised walking with head erect and chest expanded, with arms hanging free and hands loosely clenched, as Goethe directs.

The chief difficulty he found was in the cultivation of his voice, for he was overheard when he declaimed in the house. Then it occurred to him to go outside the town. The only place where he could be undisturbed was the Ladugårdsgärdet. There he could look over the plain for a great distance and see whether any one was coming; there sounds

died away so quickly that it cost him an effort to hear himself. This strengthened his voice.

Every day he went out there, and declaimed against heaven and earth. The town whose church tower rose opposite *Ladugårdsgärdet* symbolised society, while he stood out here alone with Nature. He shook his fist at the castle, the churches, and the barracks, and stormed at the troops who during their manœuvres often came too close to him. There was something fanatical in his work and he spared himself no pains in order to make his unwilling muscles obedient.

## CHAPTER V

### JOHN BECOMES AN ARISTOCRAT

(1869)

AMONG those who frequented the doctor's house was a young man who studied sculpture. He had come from the lower strata of society, had been a smith's apprentice, and had now entered the Academy, where he was a probationary student. He was happy and always cheerful, believed himself called by providence to his new career, and narrated how he had been aroused and impelled by the spirit to work in the service of the Beautiful. John liked him because he was not introspective or self-critical and quite free from self-consciousness. Moreover he was a fellow culprit, who was making the same daring attempt as John to work his way out of the lower class, but entirely lacked the consciousness of guilt which persecuted the latter.

One day this friend, whose name was Albert, came to him and said that he was going to Copenhagen to visit Thorwaldsen's Museum. An enterprising speculator had arranged a trip there through the canal and back by sea for a very small fare. "You come too," he said, and it was soon settled that John should accompany him with one of the boys. The occasion of the expedition was the

crown princess's entry into Copenhagen, but that was a secondary object in the eyes of the pilgrims to Thorwaldsen's tomb.

On an August evening John sat on the poop of the steamer with the sculptor, one of the boys and a school friend of his. In the twilight which had already fallen one saw ladies and gentlemen coming on board. The society seemed to be first-class. Stout fathers of families with field-glasses and tourist knapsacks, ladies in summer dresses and hats of the latest fashion. There was a bustle and stir, as each sought a sleeping-place which was guaranteed to all. John and his companions sat quietly waiting. They had their provisions and rugs and feared nothing. When the steamer had started and the confusion had ceased, John said, "Now we will have some bread and butter before we lie down."

They looked for their knapsacks and the provision basket, but they were not to be found. They discovered that they had not come with them. This was a hard blow, for they had only a little cash and they had counted on the excellent provisions which the doctor's wife had put up for them. Accordingly they had to eat from the sculptor's box, which only contained poor dry victuals.

Then they wanted to lie down. On all sides people were asking for sleeping-places, but could not find any. The passengers were in an uproar and there was a storm of curses. They had therefore to sit on deck ; there were inquiries for the organiser of the expedition, but he was not on board. John lay down on the bare deck and the boys drew a

tarpaulin over themselves, for the dew was falling and it was bitterly cold. They awoke at Södertelje, freezing, for the sailors had taken away the tarpaulin.

On the canal bank there now appeared the organiser of the excursion, who was an upholsterer. The passengers rushed at him, drew him on board, and loaded him with reproaches. He defended himself and tried to land again, but in vain. A court martial was held; they resolved to continue their journey, but detained the upholsterer as a hostage. The steamer went on through the canal, but as it was passing through a lock, the man swung himself up on the dam and disappeared amid a hail of curses.

The journey was continued and by midday they were in the Gotha canal. Dinner was laid on the poop. John and his companions ensconced themselves in the lifeboat which hung there and ate a simple meal out of the sculptor's box. The sculptor, who had slept on a bale down in the luggage-hold, was in a good humour and knew all the passengers' characters and names.

The dinner-table was now crowded. It was presided over by a master chimney-sweep with his family. Then there came pawnbrokers, public-house keepers, cabmen, butchers, waiters, with their families, a number of young shop boys and some girls. John suffered when he saw stewed perch and strawberries together with claret and sherry, for he had been so spoilt by luxury that simple food made him poorly. This was the "upper

class " among the passengers. The master chimney-sweep played the grand gentleman, he made a grimace at the claret and scolded the waitress who said that the restaurant-keeper was responsible. The porter from the Record Office affected the learned man, and as an official seemed to look down on the " Philistines."

While the sherry circulated, speeches were made. The lower class from the fore-deck hung on the gunwales and hand-rails and listened. The pariahs in the lifeboat were ignored. People knew that they were there, but did not see them. They may very likely have wished the " white cap " away, for there were two eyes under its peak, which saw that they were no better than himself. John felt that. He had just emerged from this class to which he belonged by birth, but he had no food and was nothing. He felt his inferiority and his superiority ; and their superiority. They had worked ; therefore they ate. Yes, but he had worked as much as they, though not in the same way. He had derived honour from his work, while they took the good eating and dispensed with the honour. One could not have both.

The people sat there satisfied and happy, drank their coffee and liqueurs, and occupied the whole poop. They now became bold and made remarks over those in the lifeboat, who could only suffer in silence, because the others were in the majority and the upper class, for they were consumers.

John felt himself in an element which was not his. There was an atmosphere of hostility about



him, and he felt depressed. There were no police on board to help him, no arbitration to appeal to, and if there were a quarrel, all would condemn him. There only needed a sharp retort on his part, and he would be struck. "The deuce!" he thought, "it would be better to obey officers and officials; they would never be such tyrants as these democrats."

Later on, at Albert's advice, he sought to approach them, but they were inaccessible.

Further on during the voyage between Venersborg and Göteborg the explosion came. John and his companions' hunger increased so much that one day they determined to go down to the dining-saloon and eat some bread and butter. It was so full of people eating and drinking that they could hardly find room. John's pupil, according to the custom of his class, kept his hat on. The master chimney-sweep noticed this. "Hullo!" he said, "is the ceiling too high for you?"

The boy seemed not to understand him.

"Take your hat off, boy!" he shouted again.

The hat remained as it was. A shop assistant knocked it off. The boy picked up the hat, and put it again on his head. Then the storm burst. They all rushed on him like one man and knocked the hat off. Then they went for John, "And such a young devil has a tutor who cannot teach boys to know their proper place! We know well enough who *you* are." Then they rained abuse on his parents. John tried to inform them that in the social circles to which the boy belonged, it was the custom to keep one's hat on in public places,

and that he had not intended any expression of contempt by it. But his explanation was ill-received. What did he mean by "those circles"? What nonsense he talked! Did he want to teach them manners? And so on.

Yes, he could; for it was precisely from these circles that they had learnt five-and-twenty years ago to take their hats off, which was no longer the custom, and he could have told them that in twenty-five years more they would keep their hats on as soon as they got wind that *that* was the fashion. But they had not discovered it yet.

John and his friends went again on deck. "One cannot argue with these people," he said.

His nerves were shaken by the scene just witnessed. He had seen an outbreak of class-hatred and the flashing eyes of people whom he had not injured; he had felt the foot of the upper class of the future upon his breast. They had become his enemies; the bridge between him and them was broken down; but the tie of blood remained and he cherished the same hatred towards aristocratic society, and its unjust ascendancy as they did; he felt the same grudge against the conventions before which they all had to bow; yes, he had *Karl Moor*'s replies in his mind, but those who had just defeated him were all *Spiegelbergers*.<sup>1</sup> If they got the upper hand they would trample on all,—great and small; if he got the upper hand, he would only trample on the great. That was the difference between them. It was, however, education which

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Schiller's "Robbers,"*

had made him more democratic than they; he would therefore side with the educated. They would work for those below, but from a distance, and from above. One could not handle this raw uncouth mass.

The stay on board was now intolerable. An outbreak might take place at any moment. And it came.

They were now in the Kattegat, and John was sitting on the upper deck when he heard a loud noise beneath him of voices and cries. He thought he recognised his pupil's voice, and rushed down. On the middle deck stood the accused surrounded by a crowd. A pawnbroker waved his arms about and shouted. John asked what the matter was.

"He has stolen my cap," shouted the pawnbroker.

"I don't believe it possible," said John.

"Yes, I saw it; he has put it in this clothes bag."

It was John's bag. "That is mine," said John. "You can look into it yourself." He opened the bag and there lay the pawnbroker's cap! There was general excitement. John stood convicted and a storm was on the point of breaking out against the two thieves. A student who stole! That was a bonne bouche. How had it happened? Now John remembered. He had a grey cap similar to the pawnbroker's which he used to sleep in at night. He had told the boy to put it in his bag; the boy had taken the wrong one. John turned to the foredeck passengers: "Gentlemen," he began, "do you think it likely that a rich man's son would

go and take a greasy cap when he has a perfectly new one? Do you not see that there has been a mistake?"

"Yes," said the plebeians, "there has."

Only the pawnbroker was obstinate and stuck to his statement.

"Then it only remains for me to beg this gentleman's pardon for the mistake, and I ask my pupil to do the same."

The latter did so, though unwillingly. There was general satisfaction and a murmured opinion that he had "spoken like a gentleman." The matter was fortunately settled.

"You see," said John to the boy, "the people are open to reason after all!"

"Bah! That was only because they felt flattered at being called gentlemen,—the cursed rabble!"

"Perhaps," answered John, who felt that he had been sufficiently humiliated for such a trifle.

At last they reached Copenhagen. Hungry, freezing, and in the worst of humours they sat in the rain outside the Thorwaldsen Museum, which was closed on account of the festivities. But Albert swore he would get in. After they had waited for an hour with the master chimney-sweep, the public-house keeper, and all the other passengers there came an old man who looked learned and wished to enter. Albert rushed after him, mentioned the name of Molins, the Swedish sculptor, and they got in, leaving the other passengers outside. Albert was delighted, and could not help making a face at the master chimney-sweep who

remained outside. But the one who enjoyed it most was the young sinner, who hated the mob.

"Now we are gentlemen," he said.

John was not in the mood to enjoy Thorwaldsen's works. He regarded him as an average artist talented enough to win fame. Albert found the antiques too elaborate, but did not dare to criticise them. They did not witness the royal entry, but sat on the tower of the Fruekirke and looked at the view. At nightfall, when they felt tired and exhausted, they wanted to go down to the steamer to sleep, but it had gone to Malmo. They stood in the street in the rain. They could not go to an hotel, for they had no money. Albert resolved to go to a public-house and ask for a night's lodging. They found a sailors' inn near the public-house. The landlord said it was only for seamen, but they answered that they must have shelter. They were taken into a back room where there were two camp-beds, but a basin was not to be seen. The walls were unpapered and looked shabby. In one of the beds lay a sailor. Who was to be his bed-fellow? Albert undertook that, and slept with the stranger, who was a Dutchman. So they all went to sleep, John cursing the whole adventure, for the bed-clothes were malodorous.

The return voyage home by sea was one long penance. Without provisions and hardly any money they had to sustain life on raw eggs which they bought in the small towns they touched at. These along with stale bread and brandy, composed their diet for three days. Albert alone was cheerful and

enjoyed himself. He slept on the poop with the passengers and amused them with stories ; he was akin to them, and knew their language. He drank with them and got hot food ; he even went into the kitchen sometimes and begged himself a plate of soup. "How easily he takes life !" thought John. "He does not miss luxuries, for he has never known them ; he will never be expelled as an intruder when he approaches people ; he feasts while others starve, and sees only friends everywhere. But his day will come when he will no longer be one of the lower class, when luxury and refined habits will make him as helpless and unfortunate as me."

When he got home he was furious. So it was everywhere. Those who were above trampled on those below, and those who were below tried to pull one back when one tried to mount. What was the meaning of all this talk about aristocrats and democrats ? The lower class spoke of their democratic way of thinking, as though it were a virtue. What virtue is there in hating those who are above ? What is the meaning of "aristocrat" ? *Aριστος* means the best, and *κρατεω* "I rule." (Therefore an aristocrat is one who wishes that the best should rule and a democrat one who wishes that the worst should do so.) But then comes the question : Who are really the best ? Are a low social position, poverty and ignorance things that make men better ? No, for then one would not try to do away with poverty and ignorance. Into whose hands then should men commit political power, with the knowledge that it would be in the hands

of the least mischievous? Into the hands of those who knew most? Then one would have professorial government, and Upsala would be—no, not the professors! To whom then should power be given? He could not answer, but certainly not to the chimney-sweep and cab-owner who were on the steamer.

On this occasion he did not go deeper into the matter, for the question had not yet been raised whether the same culture could not be imparted to every one, or whether there need be any governing body at all.

He had come across the worst aristocracy of all, the upper stratum of the lower class, or, to name them by their usual ugly title, "the Philistines." They were a bad copy of the aristocracy; they sided with the powerful, aped the habits of their superiors, grew rich by others' labours, quoted authorities and hated opposition with the exception of their silent opposition to those above them. The master chimney-sweep made money through the toil of the abjectly poor, the cab-owner through the wretched cabbies and hacks, the pawnbroker wrung unrighteous gain from the need of the poverty-stricken, and so on, everywhere. A teacher, on the other hand, a doctor, an artist, could not depute slaves to his work; he must do it himself, and was therefore not such a shark as those below. If, then, culture brought men happiness and made them better, then the aristocracy were justified and beneficent, and could regard themselves as better than those below. Yes, but one could buy culture

for money, could beg or borrow the means for it, as so many students did, and there was no virtue in that at any rate. Yet one could not help feeling superior to others when one knew more and observed the laws of social life so as to injure no one. All that remained for the real democracy was to reduce everything to a dead level, so that no one need feel themselves below, and no one could think they were above.

## CHAPTER VI

### BEHIND THE CURTAIN

(1869)

THE Swedish theatre was at this time exposed to many attacks, and when is a theatre not in that condition ? The theatre is a miniature society within society, with a monarch, ministers, officials, and a whole number of classes, ranged above one another in ranks. Is it any wonder that this society is always exposed to the attacks of the malcontents ? But at this period the attacks had a more practical object. A former provincial actor had written a pamphlet against the Theatre Royal, of little real importance, but with the result that the author was invited to a seat on the board of directors. This aroused imitators, and many published treatises in order to attain the same result.

As a matter of fact, the Theatre Royal was neither better nor worse than it had been before. "But," it was asked, "if the theatre is an institution supported by subscriptions for forwarding culture, why set an uncultivated person at the head of it ?" To this it was answered, "We have just had one of the most learned men in the country as director, and how did that answer ? Although he

had the advantage of plebeian birth he was worried to death by the democratic press, which incessantly carped at him." At last, in our time, the utopia of self-government has been realised, the theatre has a man from the lower classes at its head, and there is general satisfaction.

On the day fixed, John went to the theatre in order to announce his intention of making his *début*. After some delay, he was sent for and asked his business.

"I want to make my *début*."

"Oh! have you studied any special character?"

"Karl Moor in 'The Robbers,'" he answered more defiantly than was necessary.

They looked at each other and smiled. "But one must have three rôles; have you got no other to suggest?"

"Lucidor!"

There was a consultation, and John was informed that these dramas were not now in the repertory of the theatre. He objected that this was not a sufficient reason for his not undertaking those rôles, but received the perfectly fair answer, that the theatre could not stage such important dramas and disarrange its programme for untried débutants. Then the director proposed to John that he should take the rôle of the "Warrior of Ravenna." But after the great success which had attended the last actor of that part, he dared not. They finally suggested that he should have a talk with the literary manager. Then began a battle which was probably not the first or the last which had taken place in that room.

"Be reasonable, sir ; one must study this profession like all others. No one becomes an adept all of a sudden. Creep before you walk. Undertake at first a minor rôle."

"No, the rôle must be great enough to sustain me. In a minor rôle one must be a great artist in order to attract attention."

"Yes, but listen to me, sir ; I have experience."

"Yes, but others have made their débüt in leading parts, without having been on the stage before."

"But you will break your neck."

"Very well, then ! I will !"

"Yes, but the board of directors will not give the best stage in the country to the first chance aspirant to make experiments on."

That seemed reasonable. He therefore consented to undertake a minor rôle. He was given the part of Härved Boson in Hedberg's *Marriage of Ulfosa*.

John read over the part at home, and was astonished. It was quite insignificant. He only had a few quarrels with his brother-in-law and then embraced his wife. But he had to undertake the part, as he had agreed to do.

The rehearsals began. To have to shout out empty words without meaning was repugnant to him.

After some trials the teacher declared that he had no more time and recommended John to take lessons in the Dramatic Academy.

"But I won't be a pupil," he said.

"No, of course."

They talked of the Dramatic Academy, as of an

elementary or Sunday School; all kinds of pupils were accepted whether they had any education or not. John did not intend to become a pupil, but went just to listen. He went there reluctantly. Accustomed to be a teacher himself, he was received as a sort of honorary guest, and sat down, but attracted an uncomfortable amount of attention. The hour was passed in reciting "Vintergatan," which he knew by heart, and some other pieces of verse.

"But one can't learn anything for the stage here," he ventured to say to the teacher.

"Well! come on the stage, and try before the footlights."

"How can I do that?"

"As a supernumerary actor."

"Supernumerary! H'm! That is like going downhill before beginning," thought John. But he determined to go through with it. One morning he received an invitation to try a part in Björnson's *Maria Stuart*. The theatre messenger gave him a little blue note-book on which was written, "A nobleman," and inside, on a white sheet of paper, "The Lords have sent an intermediary with a challenge to Count Bothwell." That was the whole part! Such was to be his *début*!

At the appointed time he went up the little back stairs, passed the door-keeper and came on the stage. It was the first time that he was behind the scenes, and saw the reverse of the medal. The stage looked like a great warehouse with black walls; a cracked and dirty floor like that of a hay

loft, and grey linen screens mounted on rough wood.

It was here that he had seen represented majestic scenes from the world's history; here Masaniello had shouted "Death to Tyrants" while John stood trembling at the end of the fourth row among the audience; here Hamlet had given vent to his scorn and suffered his sorrows, and from here Karl Moor had defied society and the whole world. John felt alarmed. How could one preserve the illusion here in sight of the unpainted wood and the grey canvas? Everything looked dusty and dirty; the workmen were poor melancholy devils, and the actors and actresses looked insignificant in their ordinary clothes.

He was led into the lobby where they were going to dance for half-an-hour the gavotte, which introduced the play. It was broad daylight. The old music teacher sat on a chair and played the viol. The ballet-master shouted, struck his hands together and arranged them in their places. "I didn't bargain for this," thought John, but it was too late. So he found himself in the midst of a complicated dance which he did not know, and was pushed about and scolded. "No, I am not going to do this," he thought, but he could not get out of it.

A feeling of shame came over him. Dancing in the day-time was not a seemly occupation. And then to descend from teacher to pupil, and be the last here; he had never before gone back so far.

The bell rang for the rehearsal, and they were driven on the stage. Then they were arranged for

the gavotte. By the footlights stood the chief actors who had the important rôles; and behind them the rest in two lines occupied the background.

The orchestra struck up and the dance began in slow solemn rhythm. From the footlights were heard the deep voices of the two Puritans lamenting the depravity of the court.

*Lindsay.* "Look! the dancing lines wind like snakes in the sun. Listen! the music plays with the flames of hell! The devil's roar of laughter is in it."

*Andrew Kerr.* "Hush, hush; the penalty will overwhelm them as the sea overwhelmed Pharaoh's army."

*Lindsay.* "Look, how they whisper! The infecting breath of sin! See their voluptuous smiles; see the ladies' frivolous gowns."

*Citizen.* "All that Knox preaches is wasted on this court."

*Lindsay.* "He is as the prophet in Israel, he does not speak in vain; for the Lord Himself shall perform His word upon the ungodly race."

The piece had an arresting effect, and John felt it. The men actors had their hats, overcoats and sticks, and the women their cloaks and muffs, but still the drama was impressive in its simple greatness. He stood in the wings and listened to the whole of it; Mary Stuart did not please him; she was cruel and coquettish; Bothwell was too rough and strong; his favourite was Darnley, the weak, Hamlet-like man whose love to this woman continued to burn in spite of unfaithfulness, scorn, malice and everything. Knox was as hard as stone with his Puritanism and gloomy Christianity.

It was after all something to step forward and enact a piece of history in the garb of such persons. There was something solemn about it as he had felt before in the church. After he had gone on the stage and made his speech he went away firmly resolved to bear all on behalf of sacred art.

He had thus taken the decisive step. To his father he had written a high-flown letter, and declared that he would either become something great in the career which he had now entered or would retire from it altogether; he had resolved not to go home till he had succeeded. The doctor was sorry but made no fuss, for he saw it was impossible to stop him. But he had other secret plans for saving him which he now began to set in motion. In the first place he induced John to translate one or two medical pamphlets for which he had found a publisher. Now he came with a proposal that they should together write articles for the *Aftonbladet* (*Evening News*). John for his part had translated Schiller's essay, *The Theatre Regarded as a Moral Institution*, and as the subject of the theatre had now come up in the Reichstag the doctor wrote an introduction to it in which he seriously expostulated with the Agrarian party on their indifference to culture. The whole article was inserted. Another day the doctor came with a member of the medical journal, the *Lancet*, which treated of the question whether women were fit for a medical career. Without hesitation and instinctively John decided against it. He had an indescribable reverence for women as woman, mother and wife, but as a matter

of fact, society was founded upon the man regarded as provider for the family, and upon the woman as wife and mother; thus man had a full right to his work-market and all the duties involved in it. Every occupation taken from the man would mean a marriage less or one more overworked family-provider, for the impulse to marry was so strong in men that they would not cease to marry, however great the difficulties in which they might become involved. Moreover women had abundant opportunities of work; they could become servants, house-keepers, governesses, teachers, midwives, seamstresses, actresses, artists, authoresses, queens, empresses, besides wives and mothers. Many of these vocations were also open to the unmarried. Anything more than this was an encroachment on the man's territory. If the woman did that, the man should be free from the cares of providing for the family, and inquiries after paternity should not be made. But society would not consent to that. On the contrary it began to persecute the prostitutes by way of forcing men to marry. Once caught in the snares of the married women's property law, they would sink to the level of domestic slaves.

John instinctively took sides in this complicated problem, which was destined to take many years to solve, and wrote against the women's movement, which he saw would involve, if victorious, man's overthrow. The movement for the emancipation of women had during the fifties, assumed the wildest forms, and the war-cry, "No lords! No lords!" had shown the true nature of the movement, which

had also been ridiculed by Rudolf Wall in his comedy, *Miss Garibaldi*. But while years went on, the women had worked in silence.

Great therefore was the surprise of the doctor and John when they found their article in the *Aftonbladet* so altered that it seemed in favour of the movement. "The editor is under the thumbs of women," said the doctor, and thereby the matter was explained.

Meanwhile John's theatrical career approached a crisis. He had been sent into a green room where brandy was drunk and everything was dirty, to put on his clothes with the supernumeraries. "They want to humiliate me," he thought, "but patience!"

Now he was simply appointed as supernumerary in one opera after the other. He declared that he feared neither the footlights nor the public after having preached in church, but it was no good. The worst was, having to lounge about at the rehearsals for hours together with nothing to do. If he read a book, he was told he had no interest in the play, and if he went away, an outcry was raised.

In the Theatrical Academy rôles were merely learnt by heart. Children who had only gone through an elementary school, began to read Goethe's *Faust*, naturally without understanding anything of it. But curiously enough, their very boldness saved them; they got on so well that one was inclined to think there was no need for an actor to understand anything, if only he could say his piece fluently. After a few months John was sick of it all. It was all mechanical. The greatest actors were blasé

and indifferent, never spoke of art, but only of engagements and honorariums. There was no trace of the gay life behind the scenes, of which so much had been written. They sat silent waiting for their turns to come; the dancers and actresses in their costumes, sewing and stitching. In the lobby the actors went about on tip-toe, looked at the clock and put on their false beards, without speaking a word.

One evening, when *Maria Stuart* was being acted, John sat alone in the lobby reading a paper. The actor Dahlqvist, who was taking the part of John Knox, came in. John, who cherished a deep admiration for the great actor, stood up and bowed. If he could only speak with such a man. He trembled at the very thought. Knox, with his venerable long white hair, his black dress, and his great eyes half-sunk in his powerful deeply-lined face, sat down at the table. He yawned. "What is the time?" he asked in a sepulchral tone. John answered that it was half-past ten, unbuttoning his Burgundian velvet jacket to look for the watch which was not there.

"The time is going devilish slow this evening," said Knox and yawned again. Then he began to retail bits of gossip. He was only a ruin of his former greatness when his acting of *Karl Moor* had cast all his rivals into the shade. He too had seen through everything and was weary of it all. And yet he had once thought so highly of his art.

Since John had now the right of free entrance into the theatre he tried to study acting from the

auditorium. But behold ! the illusion was gone ! There was Mr. So-and-so and Mrs. So-and-so, there was the background for *Quentin Durward*, there sat Högfelt, and there behind the scenes, stood Boberg. There was no further possibility of illusion.

He was sick of the wretched rôle which he had to repeat continually. But he also felt remorse and feared that he could not retire from the game honourably. At last he plucked up courage and demanded a leading part. The piece in which it occurred had already been performed fifty times, and the chief actors were tired of it, but they had to come. The rehearsal took place without costumes or scenery. John was accustomed to the declamatory manner usual then, and shouted like a preacher. It was a failure. After the rehearsal the head of the theatrical academy pronounced his verdict and advised John to enter it for a course of training, but he would not. He wept for rage, went home and took an opium pill which he had long kept by him, but without effect ; then a friend took him out and he got intoxicated.

## CHAPTER VII

### JOHN BECOMES AN AUTHOR

(1869)

THE next morning he felt in a state of complete collapse. His nerves still trembled and his body felt the fever of shame and intoxication. What should he do ? He must save his honour. He must still hold out for two or three months and try again. That day he remained at home and read *The Stories of a Barber-Surgeon*. As he read it seemed to him that they recorded his own experience ; they were about the reconciliation of a step-son to his step-mother. The breach in his domestic life had always weighed upon him like a sin, and he longed for reconciliation and peace. That day this longing took an unusually melancholy form, and as he lay on the sofa, his brain began to evolve various plans for smoothing away the domestic discord. A woman-worshipper as he then was, and under the influence of the book he had been reading, he thought that only a woman could reconcile him with his father. This noble rôle he assigned to his step-mother.

While thus lying on the sofa he felt an unusual degree of fever, during which his brain seemed to

work at arranging memories of the past, cutting out some scenes, and adding others. New minor characters entered; he saw them mixing in the action, and heard them speaking, just as he had done on the stage. After one or two hours had passed, he had a comedy in two acts ready in his head. This was both a painful and pleasurable form of work if it could be called a work; for it went forward of itself, without his will or co-operation.

But now he had to write it. In four days the piece was ready. He kept on going from the writing-table to the sofa and back; and in the intervals of his work, he collapsed like a rag. When the work was finished, he drew a deep sigh of relief, as though years of pain were over, as though a tumour had been cut out. He was so glad, that he felt as though some one was singing within him. Now he would offer his piece to the theatre;—that was the way of salvation. The same evening he sat down to write a note of congratulation to a relative who had found a situation. When he had written the first line, it seemed to him to read like a verse. Then he added the second line which rhymed with the first. Was it no harder than that? Then with a single effort he wrote a four-page letter in rhyme and discovered that he could write verse. Was it no harder than that? Only a few months before he had asked a friend to help him with some verses for a special occasion. He had, however, received a negative but complimentary answer, in being told not to drive in a hired carriage, when he had one of his own.

One was not then born to write verses, he said to himself, nor did one learn it, though all kinds of verse-measures were taught in school, but it came,—or did not come. It seemed to him like the working of the Holy Spirit. Had the psychical convulsion, which he had felt at his defeat as an actor, been so strong that it had turned upside down all the strata of his memories and impressions, and had the violent impulse set his imagination to work? There had doubtless been a long preparation going on. Was it not his imagination, which had conjured up pictures, when as a child he had been afraid of the dark? Had he not written essays in school and letters for years? Had he not formed his style through reading, translating and writing for the papers? Yes, he had, but it was not till now that he noticed in himself the so-called creative power of the artist.

The art of the actor was therefore not the one suited to his powers; his having thought so was a mistake which could easily be rectified. Meanwhile he must keep his authorship fairly secret and remain at the theatre till the end of the season, so that his failure as an actor might not be known, or at any rate till his piece was accepted, as it naturally would be, for he thought it good.

But he wished to make sure of it, and for that purpose invited two of his learned friends outside the theatrical circle. In the evening before they came, he arranged the lumber-room which he had hired in the doctor's house. He tidied it up, lighted two candles instead of the study lamp, covered the table with a clean cloth and set on it a punch-bowl

with glass, ash-trays and matches. This was the first time he had entertained guests, and the experience was novel and strange.

The work of an author has often been compared to childbirth, and the comparison has something to justify it. He felt a kind of peace like that which follows parturition ; something or some one seemed to be there which, or who, was not there before ; there had been suffering and crying and now there was silence and peace. He felt in a festival mood as he used to do in the old times at home ; the children were in their Sunday best, and their father in his black frock coat cast a last look round on the arrangements before the guests came.

His friends arrived and he read the piece through in silence till the end. They gave their verdict, and John was greeted by his elders as an author.

When they had gone, he fell on his knees on the floor, and thanked God for having delivered him from difficulty and bestowed on him the gift of poetry. His communion with God had been very irregular ; it was a curious fact, that in cases of great necessity he rallied his powers within himself and did not cry to the Lord at all ; but on joyful occasions, on the other hand, he involuntarily felt the need of at once thanking the Giver of all good. It was just the contrary to what it had been in his childhood, and that was natural since his idea of God had developed into that of the Author and Giver of all good things, whereas the God of his childhood had been a God of terror whose hand was full of misfortunes.

At last he had found his calling, his true rôle in life and his wavering character began to develop a backbone. He had a pretty good idea now of what he wanted, and this gave him at least a rudder to steer by. Now he pushed off from land to go for a long voyage, but always ready to tack when he encountered too strong a head wind,—not, however, to fall to leeward, but the next moment to luff his ship up to the wind with bellying sails.

By writing this comedy, he had now relieved himself of his domestic troubles. He next described the religious conflicts he remembered so vividly in a three-act play. This lightened the ship considerably.

His creative energy during this period was immense. He had the writing fever daily; within two months he composed two comedies and a rhymed tragedy, besides occasional verses. The tragedy was his first real "work of art," as the phrase is, for it did not deal with any of his subjective experiences. "Sinking Hellas" was the not inconsiderable theme. The composition was finished and clear, but the situations were somewhat threadbare, and there was a good deal of declamation. The only original elements in it were an austere moral tone and contempt for uncultured demagogues. Thus, for instance, he introduced an old man inveighing against the immorality and want of patriotism of the youth of the time. He made Demosthenes speak disparagingly of a demagogue, and express something of what he had felt towards the master chimney-sweep and pawnbroker

on the journey to Copenhagen. The head of the Theatrical Academy also got a rap over the knuckles because he had often lamented over John's "lack of culture." The piece was aristocratic in tone, and the freedom celebrated in it was that which was the object of aspiration in the sixties,—national freedom.

Meanwhile he had sent his domestic comedy anonymously to the board of management of the Theatre Royal. While it was under consideration, he went on cheerfully with his work as supernumerary actor. "Just you wait!" he said to himself, "then my turn will come and I shall have a word to say in the matter." He was now quite cool on the stage, and felt, even when dressed as a peasant youth in *Wilhelm Tell*, like a prince in disguise. "I am certainly no swineherd, though you may think so," he hummed to himself.

He had to wait long for an answer about his piece. At last he lost patience and revealed himself as the author to the head of the Theatrical Academy. The latter had read the piece and found talent in it, but said it could not be played. This was not a great blow for him, for he still had the tragedy in reserve. That was better received, but he was told it needed remodelling here and there.

One evening when the Academy closed, the head instructor expressed a wish to speak with John. "Now we see what you are good for," he said. "You have a fine career in front of you; why should you choose an inferior one? You can become an actor probably if you work for some years, but why

toil at this thankless task? Go back to Upsala and take your degree if you can. Then become an author, for one must first have experiences in order to write well."

To become an author,—that John agreed with, and also with the suggestion that he should give up the theatre; but as for returning to Upsala,—no! He hated the university, and did not see how the useless things one learnt there could help him as an author; he rather needed to study life at first hand. But then he began to reflect, and when he considered that, at present, he could get no piece of his accepted so as to serve as a plank to save himself by, he grasped at the other straw,—Upsala. There was no disgrace in becoming a student again, and at the theatre they knew that he was not only an unsuccessful débutant, but also an author.

At the same time he learnt that there was a legacy due to him from his mother of a few hundred kronas. With them he could support himself for a half-year at the university. He went to his father, not as a prodigal son, but as a promising author, and as a creditor. There was a vehement dispute between them which ended in John receiving his legacy. He had now conceived the plan of a tragedy with the startling title "Jesus of Nazareth." It dealt in dramatic form with the life of Christ, and was intended, with one blow and once for all, to shatter the divine image and eradicate Christianity. But when he had completed some scenes, he saw that the subject-matter was too great and would demand prolonged and tedious study.

The theatrical season now approached its end. The Theatrical Academy gave their customary stage performance. John had received no rôle in it, but undertook the task of prompter. And his career as an actor closed in the prompter's box. To this was reduced his ambition of acting *Karl Moor* on the stage of the Great Theatre! Did he deserve this fate? Was he worse equipped for acting than the rest? That was probably not so, but the question was never decided.

In the evening after the performance, a dinner was given to the Academy pupils. John was invited and made a speech in verse in order to make his exit seem as little like a fiasco as possible. He became intoxicated, as usual, behaved foolishly and disappeared from the scene.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE "RUNA" CLUB

(1870)

THE Upsala of the sixties showed signs of the end and dissolution of a period which might be called the Boströmic.<sup>1</sup> In what relation does the philosophic system which prevails in a given period stand to the period itself? The system seems like a collection of the thoughts of the period at a particular point of time. The philosopher does not make the period, but the period makes the philosopher. He collects all the thoughts of his period and thereby exercises an influence on it, and with the close of the period his influence ends. The Boströmic philosophy had three defects; it wished to be definitely Swedish; it came too late; and it wished to outlive its period. To attempt to construct a purely Swedish philosophy was absurd, for that meant trying to break loose from the connection with the great mother-stem which grows on the Continent and only sends out seeds towards the Northern peninsula. The attempt came too late, for time is necessary to construct a system, and before the system was constructed, the period had passed.

<sup>1</sup> Boström: Swedish Philosopher (1797-1866).

Boström, as a philosopher, was not, as it were, shot out of a cannon. All knowledge is collecting-work, and is coloured by the personality of the collector. Boström was a branch grown out of Kant and Hegel, watered by Biberg and Grubbe, and finally producing some offshoots of his own. That was all. He seems to have derived his fundamental principle from Krause's Pantheism, which itself was an attempt to unite the philosophy of Kant and Fichte with that of Schelling and Hegel. This eclecticism had been already attempted by Grubbe. Boström first studied theology, and this seemed to have a hampering effect on his mind when he wrote about speculative theology. His moral philosophy he derived from Kant. To call him an original philosopher is provincial patriotism. His influence did not reach beyond the frontiers of Sweden, nor did it outlast the sixties. His political system was already antiquated in 1865, when the students out of reverence for the philosopher, had still to declare, conformably to his textbook, that the representation of the four estates was the only reasonable one—a doctrine which was subsequently contradicted in the college lectures.

How did Boström come by such an idea? Can one draw an inference from the accidental circumstance that he, a poor man's son from Norrland, came into too close touch with King John and his court, in his capacity of tutor to the princes? Could the philosopher escape the common lot of generalising in *certain* respects, from his own predilections and current time-sanctioned ideas? Probably not.

K

Boström as an idealist was subjective—so subjective that he denied reality an independent existence, declaring that, “to be is to be perceived (by men).” The world of phenomena therefore, according to him, exists only in and through our perceptions. The error of the deduction was overlooked, and it was a double one. The system rested on an unproved assumption, and had to be corrected ; it is true that the phenomenal world only exists for *us* through our perception, but that does not prevent its existing for itself without our perception. In fact science has demonstrated that the earth already existed with a very high degree of organic life, before any one was there to perceive it.

Boström broke with ecclesiastical Christianity, but, like Kant and the later evolutionist philosophers, retained Christian morality. Kant had been arrested in the bold progress of his thought by a want of psychological knowledge, and had simply laid down as axioms the categorical imperative and the practical postulate. The moral law, which depends on the epoch and changes with it, received in his system quite a Christian colouring as God’s command. Boström was still “under the law”; he judged the moral worth or baseness of an action simply by its motives ; according to him the only satisfactory motive is that regard for the spiritual nature of duty which is revealed in conscience. But there are as many consciences as there are religions and races ; therefore his moral system was quite sterile.

Boström’s importance for theological development

only consisted in his coming forward against Bishop Beckman in the discussion regarding the doctrine of hell (1864), although that doctrine had recently been rejected by the cultivated with the assistance of the rationalists. On the other hand Boström was obstructive in his pamphlets *The Irresponsibility and Divine Right of the King* and *Are the Estates of the Realm Justified in Resolving on and Carrying Out the Change in the So-called (!) Representation of the People?* (1865).

In his capacity as an idealist, Boström is, for the present generation, not only without significance, but positively reactionary. He is nothing but a necessary link in the worthless reactionary philosophy which followed with such fatal obscurantism the "illuminative" philosophy of the eighteenth century. He has lived and is dead. Peace to his ashes !

Literature ought to be another barometer for testing the atmosphere of any given period. And in order to be that, it must be free to deal with the questions of that period ; but this, the then prevailing æsthetic theories forbade.

Poetry ought to be and was (according to Boström) a recreation like the other fine arts. Under such a theory and influenced by the prevalent idolatry of the "ego," poetry became merely lyrical, expressing the poet's small personal feelings and inclination, and reflecting therefore only some of the features of the period, and those perhaps, not the most important. Only two names in the poetry of the sixties were of importance—Snoilsky and Björck.

Snoilsky was "awake," to use a pietistic expression, Björck was dead. Both were born poets, as the saying is; that is to say, their talents showed themselves earlier than usual. Both attained distinction while still at school, early won honour and renown, and by birth and position were enabled to view life from its sunny heights. Snoilsky, without knowing it, was under the power of the spirit of the new age. Freed from the fear of hell and monkish morality, experiencing the retrenchment of his privileges as a nobleman, he gave free play both to mind and body. In his first poems he was a revolutionary and praised the cap of liberty; he preached the emancipation of the flesh and had a certain dislike to over-culture as a conventional restraint. But as a poet, he did not escape the poet's tragic destiny—not to be taken seriously. Poetry in the eyes of the public, was simply poetry, and Snoilsky was a poet. Björck had a mind which was not capable of receiving strong impressions. At peace with himself, languid, complete from the beginning, he lived his life sunk in his own reflections or noticed only the trifling events of the outer world and described them neatly and correctly. In the opinion of the great majority who live the peaceful life of automata his poetry shows a remarkable degree of philanthropy. But why does not this philanthropy extend itself further to large circles of men, and to humanity at large? In the writer's opinion Björk's philanthropy does not extend beyond the limits of the personal quiet which the individual attains when he ignores the duties of social life. He is satisfied with the world

because the world has been kind to him ; he avoids strife because it disturbs his own serenity. Björck is an example of the fortunate man whose life is not in conflict with his upbringing, but who rather builds up stone by stone, on the foundation already laid ; everything proceeds in a workmanlike way by level and rule ; the house is finished, as it was designed, without the plan undergoing any alteration. Stunted by domestic tyranny, tasting early the sweets of homage and reverence, he ceased to grow. He accepted Boström's compromise with Christianity without examining it, and in doing so, he had finished his life-work. His poetry is especially praised for its purity and spiritual character. What is this "purity" which in our days is so sharply contrasted with the sensual ? The secret is, that he did not get her ; just as Dante's heavenly love for Beatrice was due to the same involuntary cause. Björck therefore sang of the unattainable with the quiet melancholy of unsatisfied love. But that, however, is no virtue, and purity should be a virtue.

In short, Björck and Snoilsky sang of water and drank wine, and in this were just the opposite to the poets of our time, who are said to sing of wine and drink water. A poet's life always seems to be at variance with his teachings. Why ? Is it that, in composing, he wishes to escape from his own personality, and find another ? Is it a wish to disguise himself ? Or is it modesty, the fear of giving himself away, and of self-exposure ? This is a weighty problem for future psychologists to unravel.

✓ Björck composed poems both for the reformation

of the constitution in 1865, and for the restoration to power of the King. He saw harmony everywhere, and when he celebrated the restored union between Sweden and Norway in 1864, he was extremely melodious. He also praised Abraham Lincoln; negro-emancipation and white slavery—that is the ideal of freedom of the Holy Alliance! Revolution certainly, but legal revolution by the will of God! Well, he knew no better, and few did at that time. Therefore we do not judge the man but only his work, the motives inspiring which are a matter of indifference to posterity.

Young men read these poets, many of them with great edification. They proclaimed no new era, but prophesied after the event that now the millennium was come, the ideal realised, and lines of demarcation obliterated once for all. They looked with satisfaction on their creations, rubbed their hands, and found them all good. An atmosphere of peace had spread itself over the whole of Upsala and its neighbourhood; now one might sleep till Doomsday was the belief of old and young. But then discordant sounds began to be heard, and in the days of universal peace fire-beacons began to be seen on the neighbouring mountain-tops. From Norway open water was signalled and the revolving lights were kindled. Rome captured Greece, but Greece re-captured Rome. Sweden had captured Norway, but now Norway re-captured Sweden. Lorenz Dietrichson was appointed as professor at the university of Upsala in 1861, and he was the forerunner of Norwegian influence. He made Sweden acquainted

with Danish and Norwegian literature, then almost unknown, and founded the literary society which produced poets like Snoilsky and Björck.

After Norway had broken loose from the Danish monarchy and had ceased to be a branch of the head office in Copenhagen, it was not grafted into Sweden but retreated into itself. At the same time it opened direct communication with the continent. Its awakening to independence was coincident with a strong stream of foreign influence. It was Björnson who first roused Norway to self-consciousness; but when this degenerated into a narrow patriotism, Ibsen came with the pruning shears.

As the strife became fiercer and Christiania would not lend itself to be a field of battle, the conflict was transferred to hospitable Sweden. The Norwegian wine was well adapted for exportation; pamphlets grew in size as they travelled and in Sweden became literature. Thoughts came to the top and personalities settled at the bottom of the vessel. Ibsen and Björnson broke into Sweden; Tidemand and Gude took prizes in the art exhibition of 1866; Kierulff and Nordraak were authorities in singing and music. Then came Ibsen's *Brand*. This had appeared in 1866, but John did not see it till 1869. It made a deep impression on the primitive Christian side of him, but it was gloomy and severe. The final utterance in it regarding "Deus caritatis" was not satisfying, and the poet seemed to have had too much sympathy with his hero to have described his overthrow with cold irony.

*Brand* gave John a good deal of trouble. He

(Brand) had dropped Christianity but kept its stern ascetic morality ; he demanded obedience for his old doctrines though they were no more practicable ; he despised the tendency of the time towards humanity and compromise, but ended by recommending the God of compromise. Brand was a fanatic, a pietist, who dared to believe himself right against the whole world, and John felt himself related to this terrible egoist who was wrong besides. No half-measures ! go straight on ; break down everything that stands in the way, for you only are right ! John's tender conscience, which suffered at every step he took lest it should vex his father or friends, was stupefied by Brand. All ties of consideration and of love should be torn asunder for the sake of "the cause." That John was no longer a pietist was a piece of good fortune, otherwise he too would have been overwhelmed by the avalanche.<sup>1</sup> But Brand gave him a belief in a conscience which was purer than that which education had given him, and a law which was higher than conventional law. And he needed this iron back-bone in his weak back, for he had long periods during which by fits and starts and out of mildness he thought himself wrong, and the first who came, right ; therefore, he was also very easily misled. Brand was the last Christian who followed an old ideal, therefore he could be no pattern for one who felt a vague inclination to revolt against all old ideals.

*Brand* after all was a fine plant, but without any roots in its own period ; and, therefore, it belonged

<sup>1</sup> *See the end of Brand.*



to the herbarium. Then came *Peer Gynt*. This was rather obscure than deep and had its value as an antidote against the national self-love. The fact that Ibsen was neither banished nor persecuted after having said such bitter things against the proud Norwegians, shows that in Norway they were more honourable fighters than the Swedes afterwards showed themselves to be.

Ibsen was at that time regarded as a misanthrope and as an enemy and envier of Björnsen. People were divided into two camps, and the dispute as to which of the two was the greater was endless, for it concerned an artistic problem—"contents or form."

The influence of Norwegian on Swedish poetry has been great and partly beneficent, but there was a peculiarly Norwegian element in it, which was not adaptable to Sweden, a land with quite another development. In the sequestered valleys of Norway there lived a people who, under the pressure of need and poverty, found ready to their hand in the Christian doctrine of renunciation an ascetic philosophy which promised heaven as a compensation for earth's hardships. Nature in her most gloomy and parsimonious aspect, a damp climate, long winters, great distances between the villages,—all co-operated to preserve an austere mediæval type of Christianity. There is something which may be said to resemble insanity in the Norwegian character, of the same kind as the English "spleen;" and possibly the intimate relations of Norway with the hypochondriacal islanders may have impressed

traces on its civilisation. In Jonas Lie's *Clairvoyant* this melancholy is depicted, and in it one finds the same weird atmosphere as in the Icelandic sagas, and the theme also is similar,—the struggle of the spirit against physical darkness and cold. There we have depicted the tragic lot of the Norseman banished from sunny lands to gloomy wildernesses, and seeking relief by emigration, the ethnographical significance of which has been overlooked in view of its economical aspect. The Norwegian character is the result of many hundred years of tyranny, of injustice, of hard struggling for a livelihood, of want of gladness.

Swedish literature should have avoided absorbing these national peculiarities, but they have made it half-Norwegian. Brand still haunts Swedish literature with his ideal demands, with which the romanticised and cheerful Swede cannot sincerely sympathise. Therefore this foreign garb suits him so badly; therefore modern Swedish music sounds so unharmonious, like an echo of the violins of Hardanger, tuned over again by Grieg; therefore the talk of greater moral purity sounds discordant in the mouth of the vivacious Swede. He has not suffered from long oppression and does not need to seek himself in the past; melancholy has not so beset him in his open flat land of lakes and rivers, and therefore a sour mien becomes him ill.

When the Swedes received great and novel ideas by way of Norway or direct from the Continent through Ibsen and Björnson, they should have kept the kernel and thrown away the Norwegian husk.

Even the *Doll's House* is Norwegian. Nora is related to the Icelandic women who wished to set up a matriarchate ; she belongs to the weird imperious women in *Härmänner* who again are pure Norse. In them the emotions have become frozen or distorted by centuries of cognate marriages.

The whole Swedish literature of feminism is ultra-Norwegian ; it contains the same immodest demands on the man and petting of the spoilt woman. Several young authors have introduced the Norwegian style into Swedish ; one authoress has placed the scene of her book in Norway, and made her hero talk Norwegian ! Further one could not go !

Let us welcome foreign influence which is cosmopolitan ; but not Norwegian, for that is provincial, and we have plenty of the same kind ourselves.

So John found himself again in Upsala,—the same Upsala from which he had fled nine months before, and to which he most unwillingly returned. To be compelled to a course which he did not wish always made him feel as though he were encountering a personal foe, who cajoled him out of his wishes and antipathies, and forced him to bend. Since he still believed himself under God's personal providence, he accepted that as though it were for his best. Later on he had a feeling that there was a malignant power ; this developed into the belief that there were two ruling powers, one good, one evil, which divided the empery, or ruled alternately.

He asked himself again, " What have you to do here ? " To take his degree, but especially to cover

his retreat from the theatre. Privately he wished to write a play, and, under the screen of its success, wriggle out of the examination.

At first he was not at all comfortable in his lonely attic. He had become accustomed to luxury, a large room, a good table, attendance and society. After having been habituated to be treated as a man and to have intercourse with older and cultivated people, he found himself again in a state of pupilage as a student. But he cast himself into the crowd and soon found himself on social terms with three distinct circles. The first consisted of friends whom he met by day, who were students of medicine and natural history and atheists. From them he heard for the first time the name of Darwin; but it passed by him like a doctrine for which he was not yet ripe. His evening society consisted of a priest and a lawyer with whom he played cards till deep in the night. He considered himself now in Upsala merely to grow and get older, and that it was a matter of indifference what he did, as long as he killed the time. He drew up the scheme of a new tragedy, *Eric XIV*, but found it poor, and burnt it, for his faculty of self-criticism had awakened and was severer in its demands.

Later on in the term he entered a third society, which formed his special circle during the whole of his time at Upsala and for a long while afterwards. One evening he chanced to meet a young companion with whom he had been a pupil at the private school. They discussed literature, and over a glass of toddy made the plan of forming some

young poets into a club for literary work. The plan was carried out. Besides John and the other founder of the club, four young students were elected to it. They were fine young fellows of an idealist turn of mind, as the saying is, with high purposes and enthusiastic for vague ideals. They had not yet come into contact with the hard realities of life ; they had all well-to-do parents, no cares, and knew nothing at all of the struggle for a subsistence. John, on the other hand, had just left the most unpleasant surroundings ; he had seen people who were always ready to quarrel, conceited, empty-headed pupils of the Theatrical Academy. Here he found himself transplanted into an entirely new world. There were these happy youths going to their well-supplied tables, smoking fine cigars, taking walks, and poetising beautifully over the beauty of life which they knew nothing of.

Rules were drawn up for the club, which received the name "Runa," *i. e.* "song." The choice of this title was probably due to the Northern renaissance which came in with the Scandinavian movement. Its chief ornaments were Karl XV in poetry, Winge and Malmström in painting, and Molin in sculpture. Recently it had been quickened by Björnson's and Ibsen's dramas on subjects from the old Norse life. The study of Icelandic, which had been newly introduced into the university, also lent strength to this movement.

The number of members of the club was not to exceed nine ; each of them was known by a Runic sign. John was called "Frö" and the other

founder of the club, "Ur." Every variety of opinion was represented. Ur was a great patriot and venerated Sweden with its memories. In his opinion it had the most brilliant history in Europe, and had always been free. For the rest he was a practically minded man with a special faculty for statistics, politics, and biography; he was a severe and clever critic, and also managed the affairs of the club. He was a reliable friend, good company, helpful and hearty. Secondly, there was a full-blooded romanticist who read Heine and drank absinthe—a sensitive youth enthusiastic for all old ideals, but especially for Heine. There was also a seraph who sang of the indescribably little, especially the happiness of childhood; fourthly, a silent worshipper of nature, and, lastly, an eclectic philosopher and improvisator, who had an extraordinary faculty for improvising in any style whatever, when requested. Two minutes after he had been asked, he would stand up and speak or sing on the spur of the moment in the character of Anacreon, Horace, the Edda, or any one else, and even in foreign languages.

The first meeting of the club was at Thurs', who was lodged the most comfortably in two rooms and had the best pipes. As one of the founders of the club John first of all read his prologue, which, according to the rules of the society, had to be in verse. It began by asking after the ancient bard Brage and his harp which was now silent. Brage represented the new Norse element, the resuscitation of which was believed necessary. The whole programme of

the idealists was called "a trivial striving." All the great efforts of their contemporaries after reality and for the improvement of the conditions of life was "trivial." The spirit was taken prisoner in matter, and therefore all that was material was to be regarded as the enemy. Such was the teaching of the romanticists, and of John's prologue. Then the poet went out into nature, listened to the bells of the cathedral, the wind, the pines, and the singing of the birds in order to ask the very natural question: "Nature sings; why should I then be silent?" He resolved to be no longer silent but to sing,—about the joyous youthful spring-time of life, its autumn, and about love to one's native soil. Then (he said) came the wise man with the frozen heart, took his song, dissected it and found that it was all nonsense. Thus the song was killed by "overwiseness."

It is not easy to say exactly now what John meant by "overwiseness" in 1870. He probably had simply forebodings of future critics, and the "wise man" was no other than the reviewer. Then he inveighed against the wretched mercenary souls who worship the golden calf but do not love songs. This had no connection with contemporary matters, for the sixties were remarkable for bad harvests and consequently for want of gold. The swindles by company-promoters began with the seventies. But it was the custom of the contemporary poets to attack money and the golden calf, and therefore John did so in his prologue. Now began a life of poetic idleness. Every evening they met either in

a restaurant, or in each other's rooms. But the time was not wasted in view of his future authorship. John could borrow books from the well-stocked libraries of his friends, and the interchange of opinions accustomed him to look at literature from different points of view. But for them real life, public interests, contemporary politics did not exist; they lived in dreams. Sometimes his lower-class consciousness awoke, and he asked himself what he had to do among these rich youths. But he soon stilled these scruples by drink and talk, and encouraged himself to go forward and demand something of life, for he had in his companions' opinion a good chance.

His room was a wretched one; the rain came through the roof, and he had no proper bed, but only a plank-bed, which in the day-time served as a sofa. When time hung heavily on his hands and he grew weary of poetical discussions he looked up his old school-fellow, the natural history student. There he looked through the microscope, and heard of Darwin and the new scientific views. His friend gave him well-meant practical advice and recommended him to get out of his difficulties by writing a one-act play in verse for the Theatre Royal.

John objected that his dramatic talent had not scope enough in one act, and said that he would rather write a tragedy in five.

"Yes, but it is harder to get that accepted," replied his friend. Finally he let himself be persuaded and determined to carry out a small idea he had of a short play based on Thorwaldsen's first

visit to Rome. His friend lent him books on Italy and John set to work. In fourteen days the piece was ready.

"That will be acted," said his friend. "It has dramatic points, you see."

Since it was still a long time to the next meeting of the club, John hastened in the evening to Thurs and Rejd and read the piece to them. They were both of the same opinion as the natural history student, that the piece would be performed. They had a champagne supper, and kept drinking till the morning, and then went to sleep on the floor of Rejd's room with the punch-glasses by them. In a couple of hours they awoke, finished their half-empty glasses at sunrise and went out to continue the celebration of the occasion.

The sympathy of John's friends was hearty, unselfish and warm, without a trace of envy. He always remembered with pleasure this first success as one of the brightest recollections of his youth. The enthusiastic, devoted Rejd increased Hohn's debt of gratitude by copying out the piece in his graceful hand-writing. Then it was sent to the board of management of the Theatre Royal. Spring arrived and they spent the month of May in a continual carouse. The club had a small room in the restaurant Lilla Förderfvet for their evening suppers. There they talked, made speeches, and drank enormously. At last the term ended and they had to part, but they arranged to meet once more at Stockholm, and celebrate the festival day of the club by an excursion into the country.

L

At six o'clock one June morning the four members of the club met at Skeppsholm, where they had hired a rowing-boat. The chest of the club, a card-board box containing documents, was stowed away with baskets of provisions and bottles of wine. After Os and Rejd had taken the oars, they steered the boat to the canal leading through the Zoological Gardens, in order to reach the place they had appointed, a promontory of Liding Island. Thurs played airs on the flute to Bellmann's songs, and Frö (John) accompanied him on a guitar which he had learnt to play at Upsala.

As soon as they landed, breakfast was laid in a meadow by the shore. The club-chest adorned with leaves and flowers was set in the middle of the table-cloth, and on it were set the brandy-bottles and glasses. John, who had studied antiquities for his play, *Sinking Hellas*, arranged the meal in the Greek style, so that they wore garlands, and ate reclining. A fire was lit between some stones and coffee was made. At nine o'clock in the morning they drank brandy and punch.

John read his drama, *The Free-thinker*, which was duly criticised. Then they gave full course to their eloquence. Thurs was the best speaker; he could express emotions and thoughts rhythmically. Poems were read and received with applause. John sang folk-songs to the accompaniment of his guitar, some on sentimental subjects, and some on improper ones. At noon they were still in high spirits but inclined to be sleepy.

In the afternoon when the sun was over Lilla

Värtan they had a short sleep, and then the carouse passed into a new phase. Thurs, the Israelite, had recited a poem on the greatness of the North, and called on the old gods of Scandinavia. Ur, the patriot, denied him the right to appropriate other people's gods. The Jewish question came up; they took fire and nearly quarrelled, but ended by embracing.

Then began the sentimental stage. They had to weep, for alcohol has this effect on the membranes of the stomach and the (lachrymal) ducts. Ur first felt this and unconsciously sought for a melancholy subject. He burst into tears. When asked why, he did not know, but said at last that he had been treated as a buffoon, which he always was. He declared that he had a very serious nature and that he also had great troubles which no one knew about, but now he unburdened his heart and told us a domestic story. After he had done so, he became cheerful again.

But the evening was long and they began to wish to go home. Their brains were empty; they were tired of each other, and weary of play and drinking. They began to reflect and examine the philosophy of intoxication. From whence do men derive this desire to make themselves senseless? What lies behind it? Is it the southern exile's longing for a lost sunny existence in northern lands? There must be some felt necessity underlying intoxication, for a vice like this would not have laid hold of all mankind without reason. Is it that the member of society in a state of intoxication throws away all the

lies of society? For the laws of social intercourse involuntarily forbid one to speak out all one's thoughts. Otherwise whence comes the saying, *In vino veritas?* Why did the Greeks honour Bacchus as one who improved men and manners? Why did Dionysus love peace, and why was he said to increase riches? Has wine, which is chiefly drunk by men, some influence on the development of man's intelligence and activity, so that he becomes superior to woman? And why do the Muhammadans who drink no wine stand on what is regarded as a lower level of civilisation? As salt is used as a daily nutrient to replace the salts which their hunting forefathers found in the blood of beasts of the chase, does not wine compensate for some lost nutritive matter belonging to earlier stages, and, if so, which? Some idea or necessity must underlie so singular a custom.

Perhaps the need of losing consciousness justifies the axiom of the pessimists that consciousness is the beginning of suffering. Wine makes one naïve and unconscious as a child; or even as an animal. Is it the lost paradise which one wishes to recover? But the remorse which follows it? Remorse and acidity of the stomach have the same symptoms. Is there then a confusion, and are sensations called "remorse" which are only heart-burn? Or does the drinker returned to consciousness regret that he has exposed himself by daylight and betrayed his secrets? There is something to feel remorse for in that! He is ashamed that he has been taken by surprise, he feels afraid because he has exposed

himself and given away his weapons. Remorse and fear are close neighbours.

Yet once more the members of the club drowned their consciousness in drink and then got into the boat to proceed home. John and Thurs began a dispute about Bellmann<sup>1</sup> which lasted till they reached Skeppsholm, and closed with sharp remarks on both sides.

John had an old grudge against this poet. Once as a child, he had been ill for a whole summer, and had by chance taken Bellmann's *Fredman's Epistles* out of his father's book-case. The book seemed to him silly, but he was too young to form a well-grounded opinion on it. Later on, it sometimes happened that his father sat at the piano, and hummed Bellmann's songs. The boy found it incomprehensible that his father and uncle admired them so much. Subsequently one Christmas he saw a violent controversy break out between his mother and his uncle on the subject of Bellmann. The latter set the poet above everything—Bible, sermons and all. There were depths, he said, in Bellmann. Depths indeed! Probably Atterbom's romanticist one-sided criticism had filtered through the daily papers to the middle classes. As a schoolboy and student, John had sung "Up, Amaryllis" and other idylls of Bellmann's, naturally without understanding them or thinking of the meaning of the words. He sang in a quartette, or choir, for it sounded well. Finally, in 1867, he read Ljunggren's lectures and a light broke upon him, but not one of

<sup>1</sup> Famous Swedish poet.

Ljunggren's kindling. He thought the latter mad. Bellmann was a ballad-singer, that was true, but a great poet, the greatest poet of the North?—impossible!

Bellmann had sung his songs composed on the French model for the Court and his own friends, but not for the common people, who would not have understood "Amaryllis," "Eol," "The Tritons," "Fröja" and all the rococo stock-in-trade. He died and was forgotten. Why had he been disinterred by Atterbom? Because the pugnacious romantic school required an embodiment of irregularity to set up against the classicists, as they had nothing of their own to boast of. Thus the romantic school gained the day; and when one considers how cowardly most people are in the face of public opinion, and the tendency of the middle-class to ape its superiors and reverence authority, one ceases to be surprised at the elevation of Bellmann. Ljunggren and Eichhorn outstripped Atterbom in finding beauty and genius in his writings; they were reinforced by the clerical element, and thus the idol was set up for worship. Bystrom, the sculptor, had already magnified the little lottery-secretary and court-poet into a Dionysus and lent him the features of an antique bust of Bacchus.

Bellmann's idylls are careless, extemporised compositions with forced rhymes, and as disconnected as the thoughts in the brain of a drunkard. One does not know whether it is day or night, the thunder rolls in the sunshine, and the waves beat while the boat is floating calmly on the waters. They simply

provide a text for music, and for that purpose one might use a book of addresses. The meaning of the words does not matter, as long as they sound well.

According to his custom Thurs took the matter personally. It was an attack on his good taste and on his honour, for John said that his admiration of Bellmann was mere humbug; that he had read himself into it, and that it was not genuine. Thurs on the other hand declared John to be presumptuous, because he wished to criticise the greatest Swedish poet.

"Prove that he is the greatest," said John.

"Tegner and Atterbom say so."

"That is no proof."

"Simply because you have a spirit of contradiction."

"Doubt is the beginning of certainty, and absurd assertions must arouse opposition in a healthy brain."

And so on.

Although there is no such thing as a judgment which holds good universally, since every judgment is individualistic, there are, on the other hand, judgments of a majority and of a party. By means of these John was suppressed and kept silence on the subject of Bellmann for many years. Only when later on the old historian Fryxell proved that Bellmann was not the apostle of sobriety which Eichhorn and Ljunggren had made him out to be, and also no god, but a mediocre ballad-singer, did John see a gleam of hope that his individual opinion might become some day the opinion of the majority. But

he already saw the question from another point of view; Sweden would have been neither unhappier nor worse, if Bellmann had never lived. He would like to have said to the patriots and democrats, "Bellmann was a poet of Stockholm and of the Court, who jested very cruelly with poor people." He would like to have said to the Good Templars who sang Bellmann's songs, "You are singing drinking songs which were written during fits of intoxication and celebrate drink." For his own part, John held that Bellmann's songs were pleasant to sing because of the light French melodies which accompanied them, and as for their French morality it did not vex him at all—quite the contrary. But earlier, at the age of twenty-one, he was vexed by it, for he was an idealist and desired purity in poetry, just as the surviving idealists and admirers of Bellmann do at the present time.

These have used the word "humour" to save themselves and their morality. But what do they mean by "humour"? Is it jest or earnest? What is jest? The reluctance of the cowardly to speak out his mind? Humour reflects the double nature of man,—the indifference of the natural man to conventional morality, and the Christian's sigh over immorality which is after all so enticing and seductive. Humour speaks with two tongues,—one of the satyr, the other of the monk. The humorist lets the mænad loose, but for old unsound reasons thinks that he ought to flog her with rods. This is a transitional form of humour which is passing away, and already at the last gasp. The greatest

modern writers have thrown away the rod, and play the hypocrite no longer, but speak their minds plainly out. The old tippler's sentimentality can no longer count for "a good heart," for it has been discovered to be merely bad nerves.

After arguing till they were weary, the members of the club landed in Stockholm harbour.

## CHAPTER IX

### BOOKS AND THE STAGE

THE history of the development of a soul can be sometimes written by giving a simple bibliography; for a man who lives in a narrow circle and never meets great men personally, seeks to make their acquaintance through books. The fact that the same books do not make the same impression, nor have the same effect upon all, shows their relative powerlessness to convert anybody. For example, we call the criticism with which we agree good; the criticism which contradicts our views is bad. Thus we seem to be educated with preconceived views, and the book which strengthens, expresses and develops these makes an impression on us. The danger of a one-sided education through books is that most books, especially those composed at the end of an era, and at the university, are antiquated. The youth who has received old ideals from his parents and teachers is accordingly necessarily out of date before his education is completed. When he enters manhood, he is generally obliged to fling away his whole stock of old ideas, and be born again, as it were. Time has gone by him, while he was reading the old books, and he finds himself a stranger among his contemporaries.

John had spent his youth in accumulating antiquarian lore. He knew all about Marathon and Cannae, the war of the Spanish succession and the Thirty Years' War, the Middle Ages and antiquity; but when the war between France and Germany broke out, he did not know the cause of it. He read about it as he would have read a play, and was interested to see what the result of it would be.

In Kristineberg, where he spent the summer with his parents, he lay out on the grass in the park and read Oehlenschläger. For his degree examination, he had, besides his chief subject—aesthetics,—to choose a special one, and, enticed by Dietrichson's lectures, he had chosen Danish literature. In Oehlenschläger he had found the summit of Northern poetry. That was for him the quintessence of poetry,—the directness which he admired perhaps for the very reason that he had not got it. The Danish language perhaps also contributed to this result; it seemed to him an idealised Swedish, and sounded like his mother-speech from the lips of a woman worshipped from afar. When he read Oehlenschläger's Helge, Tegner's Frithiof's Saga seemed to him petty; he found it unwieldy, prosaic, clerical, unpoetic.

Oehlenschläger's dramas were a book which had an influence on John by way of a supplementary contrast. Perhaps the romantic element in them found an echo in the youth's mind, which had now awoke to poetic activity, and looked upon poetry and romance as identical. Other contributory circumstances were his liking for Norse antiquities

which Oehlenschläger had just discovered, and the unrequited love he had just then for a blond maiden who was engaged to a lieutenant. But the impression made by Oehlenschläger was only fleeting, and hardly lasted a year; it was a light spring breeze which passed by.

It fared worse with John's study of aesthetics as expounded by Ljunggren in two closely printed volumes, containing the views of all philosophers on the Beautiful, but giving no satisfactory definition of it.

John had studied the antique in the National Museum, and asked himself how the pot-house scenes of the Dutch genre painters which, when they occurred in reality, were called ugly, could be reckoned among beautiful pictures, although they were in no way idealised. To this the aesthetic philosophers gave no answer. They shirked the question and set up one theory after another, but the only excuse they could find for the admission of ugliness was that it acted as a foil, and provided a comic element. But a strong suspicion had been aroused in John that the "Beautiful" was not always beautiful.

Furthermore, he was troubled by doubts whether it was possible to have independent standards of taste. In the newly-founded paper, the *Schwedische Zeitschrift*, he had read discussions about works of art, and seen how disputants on both sides defended their position with equally strong arguments. One sought beauty in form, another in subject, and a third in the harmony between the two. Accord-

ingly a well-painted subject from still life can rank higher than the Niobe, for this group of statuary is not beautiful in its outlines, the arrangement of the drapery of the principal figure being especially tasteless although the judgment of the majority regards the work as sublime. Therefore the sublime does not necessarily consist in beauty of form.

Victor Hugo's romances had found a fertile soil in John's mind. The revolt against society; the reverence paid to Nature by the poet living on a lonely island; the scorn for the ever-prevalent stupidity; the indignation against formal religion and the enthusiasm for God as the Creator of all,—all that was germinating in the young man's mind began to grow, but was stifled by the autumn leaf-drifts of old books.

John's life in the domestic circle was now a quiet one. The storms had subsided; his brothers and sisters were grown up. His father, who still always sat over his account-ledgers, calculating the ways and means of providing for his flock of children, had become older, and now perceived that John was also older. They often discussed together topics of common interest. As regards the Franco-German War they were both fairly neutral. As Latinised Teutons they did not love the German. They hated and feared him as a sort of uncle with a right of seniority against the Swedes, and they did not forget that victorious Prussia had once been a Swedish province. The Swede had become more French than he was aware, and now he felt conscious of his relationship to *la grande nation*. In the

evenings when they sat in the garden and the noise of traffic had ceased, they heard the singing of the *Marseillaise* from Blanch's café, and the hurrahs which were soon to be silent.

In August, when the theatres re-opened, John received the long-desired news that his play had been accepted for the stage. That was the first intoxicating success which he had experienced. To have a play accepted at the Theatre Royal when he was only twenty-one was sufficient compensation for all his misfortunes. His words would reach the public from the first stage in the land; his failure as an actor would be forgotten; his father would see that his son amid all his notorious fluctuations had chosen right, and all would be well. In autumn, before the university term began, the piece was performed. It was naive, pious and full of reverence for art, but had one dramatic scene which saved it in spite of its slightness—Thorwaldsen about to shatter the statue of Jason with his hammer. But on the other hand the piece contained a presumptuous outburst against contemporary rhymers. What was the author's intention in that? How could a beginner who had so many forced rhymes himself, cast a stone at another? It was a piece of temerity which found its own punishment. John stole to the bottom of the third row of seats to view the performance of his piece from a standing position. Rejd was already there before him and the curtain was up. John felt as though he stood under an electric machine. Every nerve quivered, his legs shook, and his tears ran the whole time from pure

nervousness. Rejd had to hold his hand in order to quiet him. Now and then there was applause, but John knew that it was mostly from his relatives and friends, and did not let himself be deceived. Every stupidity which had inadvertently escaped him now jarred on his ear, and made him quiver; he saw nothing but crudeness in the piece; he felt so ashamed that his ears burned; before the curtain fell he rushed away out into the dark market-place.

He felt as though annihilated. The attack on the priests was stupid and unjust; the glorification of poverty and pride seemed to him false, his description of the relationship between father and son was cynical. How could he have shown off in this absurd way? It seemed to him as though he had exposed his nakedness, and shame overpowered every other feeling.

On the other hand he found the actors good; the *mise en scène* was more appropriate than he had expected. Everything was good except the piece itself. He wandered down to the Norrström, and felt inclined to drown himself. What most annoyed him was that he had so openly exhibited his feelings. Whence came that? And why should one in general be ashamed of such exhibitions? Why are the feelings so sacred? Perhaps because the feelings in general are false, as they only express a physical sensation, in which personality of the individual does not fully participate. If it is really so, then John was ashamed as an ordinary man, to have been untruthful in his writing and to have worn disguise.

To be moved at the sight of human suffering is regarded as a mark of fine feeling and meritorious, but it is said to be only a natural reflex-movement. One involuntarily transfers the sufferings of the other to oneself and suffers for one's own sake. Another's tears could bring one to weep just as another's yawning could make one yawn. That was all. John felt ashamed that he had lied and caught himself in the act, though the public had not caught him.

No one is such a merciless critic as a dramatist who sees his own play acted. He lets no single word pass through his sieve. He does not lay the blame on the actors, but generally admires them for rendering his stupidities with such taste. John found his play stupid. It had lain by for half a year, and perhaps he had outgrown it. Another piece was performed after it which lasted for two hours. During the whole time he wandered about the streets in the darkness, feeling ashamed of himself. He had made an appointment to drink a glass with some friends and relatives after the performance in the Hôtel du Nord, but remained away. He saw they were looking for him but did not wish to meet them. So they went in again to see the second play. At last it was over. The spectators streamed out and dispersed through the streets. He hastened away in order not to hear their comments.

At last he saw a single group standing under the portico of the dramatic theatre. They were looking out in all directions and called him. Finally he came forward as pale and melancholy as a corpse.

They congratulated him on his success. The play had been applauded and was very good. They repeated to him the verdicts of other spectators and quieted him. Then they dragged him to a restaurant and compelled him to eat and drink. "That will do you good, you old death's-head!" said a shop-assistant. John was soon pulled down from his imaginative flight. "What have you got to be melancholy for," he was asked, "when you have had a play acted by the Theatre Royal?" He could not tell them. His boldest ambition was fulfilled; but it was probably not what he wanted. The thought that in any case it was an honour did not comfort him.

The next morning he went into a shop, and bought the morning paper and read a criticism to the effect that the piece was written in choice language, and (since it was anonymous) probably by a well-known art-critic who had moved among artistic circles at Rome. That was pleasant and cheered his spirits.

At noon he started for Upsala. His father had engaged a room for him in a boarding-house, kept by the widow of a clergyman, that he might complete his studies under proper supervision.

## CHAPTER X

### TORN TO PIECES

JOHN's entrance into the boarding-house secured for him intercourse with a large and varied circle,—perhaps too varied. There were students of all ages, of all subjects, and from all districts, from clergymen who were reading for their last examination to young medical and law students. There were also ladies in the house, and John was for the eighth time in love. Again the object of his affections was unattainable, being engaged to another. The variety of this social intercourse overloaded his brain with impressions from all circles; his personality became relaxed and distracted through the self-adaptation and compromises with other people's views which are necessary in society. Besides this a great deal of drinking went on nearly every evening. On one of the first days after his arrival appeared a criticism of his play in one of the evening papers. It was very sharp but just, and therefore hit John hard. He felt stripped and seen through. The critic said that the author had concealed his insignificant personality behind a great name—Thorwaldsen—but that the disguise did not avail him and so on. John felt altogether bankrupt. In such cases one tries to defend oneself, and he compared his own with other

bad plays, which the same severe critic had praised. He felt treated unjustly, and indeed when compared with others it was so, but not when he was regarded by himself alone. The fact that the critic was worse did not make his piece better.

John became shy and averse to company. This was increased by the students' club starting a paper in which they made merry over him and his play. He fancied he saw grimaces and contempt everywhere, and went preferably by back streets on his walks.

Then there came a yet severer blow. A friend had, on his own account, published one of John's first plays,—the *Free-thinker*. While he was spending an evening with Rejd an acquaintance brought in the hated evening paper. It contained a scathing article on the play, which was mocked at and cut to pieces. John was obliged to read the article in the presence of his friends. He had, against his will, to admit that the critic was not unjust, but it upset him terribly.

Why is it so hard to hear the truth from others, while at the same time one can be so severe against oneself? Probably because the social masquerade in which we all take part makes every one fear being unmasked, probably also because responsibility and unpleasantness are involved in it. One feels oneself overreached and cheated. The critic who sits at ease and unmasks others would feel himself equally scourged and exposed if his secrets were betrayed. Social life is honeycombed with falsity, but who likes to be discovered? That is

why at times of solitude, when the past rises up un-escapably, we do not feel remorse for our faults, but for our follies and necessary cruelties. Mistakes were necessary and had some use, but follies were merely injurious and should have been avoided. It is for this reason that men pay greater honour to intelligence than to morality, for the former is a reality, the latter an idea.

Meanwhile John felt the same pains which he imagined a criminal must feel. He felt impelled to obliterate as soon as possible the impression made by his stupidity. But he felt also that a kind of injustice had been done him since he had been criticised simply and solely as a writer, although his production was a year old, and he himself, therefore, maturer than it, by a year. But it was not the fault of the critic that there was an incongruity between the criticism and the *corpus delicti*.

He began to compose another tragedy, *The Assistant at the Sacrifice*. This was intended to deal with Christendom in artistic form, and to handle the same problem and the same questions as his former play. By "artistic form" at that period was meant the laying of the scene of the play in a past epoch. John wrote the piece under the influence of Oehlenschläger and the Icelandic sagas which he had lately read in the original.

He had, however, a severe struggle with his conscience, for his father had exacted a promise from him not to write for the stage till he had passed his examination. It was, therefore, an act of deceit to take help from his father and not to

fulfil the conditions on which it was granted. But he silenced his scruples by saying to himself, "Father will be pleased enough if I have a speedy and great success." In that he was not far wrong.

But another element now entered into his life, and had a decided influence both on his views of things and his work. This was his acquaintance with two men,—an author and a remarkable personality. Unfortunately they were both abnormal and therefore had only a disturbing effect upon his development.

The author was Kierkegaard,<sup>1</sup> whose book, *Either—Or*, John had borrowed from a member of the Song Club, and read with fear and trembling. His friends had also read it as a work of genius, had admired the style, but not been specially influenced by it,—a proof that books have little effect, when they do not find readers in sympathy with the author. But upon John the book made the impression intended by the author. He read the first part containing "The Confessions of an *Æsthete*." He felt sometimes carried away by it, but always had an uncomfortable feeling as though present at a sick-bed. The perusal of the first part left a feeling of emptiness and despair behind it. The book agitated him. "The Diary of a Seducer" he regarded as the fancies of an unclean imagination. Things were not like that in real life. Moreover John was no sybarite, but on the contrary inclined to asceticism and self-torment. Such egotistic sensuality as that of the hero of Kierkegaard's work

<sup>1</sup> Danish theologian.

was absurd because the suffering he caused by the satisfaction of his desires necessarily involved him in suffering and, therefore, defeated his object.

The second part of the work containing the philosopher's "Discourse on Life as a Duty," made a deeper impression on John. It showed him that he himself was an "æsthetæ" who had conceived of authorship as a form of enjoyment. Kierkegaard said that it should be regarded as a calling. Why? The proof was wanting, and John, who did not know that Kierkegaard was a Christian, but thought the contrary, not having seen his *Edifying Discourses*, imbibed unaware the Christian system of ethics with its doctrine of self-sacrifice and duty. Along with these the idea of sin returned. Enjoyment was a sin, and one had to do one's duty. Why? Was it for the sake of society to which one was under obligations? No! merely because it was duty. That was simply Kant's categorical imperative. When he reached the end of the work *Either—Or* and found the moral philosopher also in despair, and that all this teaching about duty had only produced a Philistine, he felt broken in two. "Then," he thought, "better be an æsthetæ." But one cannot be an æsthetæ if one has been a Christian for five-sixths of one's life, and one cannot be moral without Christ. Thus he was tossed to and fro like a ball between the two, and ended in sheer despair.

Had he now read Kierkegaard's discourses, he might possibly have come a step nearer to Christianity—possibly—for it is difficult to decide that

now, but to receive Christianity again seemed to him like replacing a tooth which had been torn out, and joyfully thrown into the fire, along with the accompanying toothache. It was also possible that if he had known that the book *Either—Or* was intended to scourge one to the Cross he might have thrown it away as a jesuitical writing and been saved from his embarrassment. All that he felt now, however, was a terrible discord. He had to choose and make the jump between ethics and æsthetics, but choose how? and jump whither? He could not jump out in space to embrace a paradox or Christ,—that would have been self-destruction or madness. But Kierkegaard preached madness? Was it the despair of the over-self-conscious at finding himself always self-conscious? Was it the longing of one who sees too deeply for the unconsciousness of intoxication?

John knew well what the battle between his own will and the will of others meant. He had given his father trouble enough when he crossed his plans; but the trouble was mutual; the whole of life consisted of a web of wills crossing one another. The death of one was life-breath to another; no one could gain an advantage without hurting the one he passed by. Life was a perpetual interchange and struggle between pleasure and pain. His sensuality or desire for enjoyment had not injured others nor caused them trouble. He had never seduced the innocent, and had never enjoyed himself without paying the price. He was moral from habit, from instinct, from fear of the conse-

quences, from good taste or from education, but the very fact that he did not feel himself immoral, was a defect and a sin. After reading *Either—Or* he felt sinful. The categorical imperative stole on him under a Latin name and without a cross on its back, and he let himself be beguiled by it. He did not see that it was a two-thousand-years-old Christianity in disguise.

Kierkegaard would not have made so deep an impression on him, if a number of concurrent circumstances had not contributed to that result. In the letters of the æsthete, Kierkegaard expounded suffering as enjoyment. John suffered from public contumely; he suffered from his hard work; he suffered from unrequited affection; he suffered from unsatisfied desires; he suffered from drink, for he was intoxicated nearly every evening; he suffered as an artist from mental struggles and doubts; he suffered from the ugly scenery of Upsala; he suffered from the discomfort of his rooms; he suffered from examination-books; he suffered from a bad conscience because he did not study but wrote plays. But something else lay at the bottom of all this. He had been brought up to fulfil hard tasks and duties. Now he lived well amid ease and enjoyment. Study was an enjoyment; authorship, in spite of all its pains, was a wonderful enjoyment; the life with his comrades was sheer festivity and jollity. But his plebeian consciousness awoke and told him that it was not right to enjoy while others worked; his work was an enjoyment, for it brought him a good deal of honour, and perhaps money. This

accounted for his persistently uneasy conscience which persecuted him without a cause. Was it that he felt already the signs of this awakening consciousness of tremendous guilt as regards the lower classes, the slaves who toiled, while he enjoyed? Did he already have a foreboding of that sense of justice, which in our days has laid so strong a hold on many of the upper classes that they have restored capital which was not quite honestly earned, have expended time and toil for the liberation of the lower classes, and have worked from impulse and instinct against their own interests, in order to do right? Possibly.

But Kierkegaard was not the man to resolve the discord. It was reserved for the evolutionary philosophers to make peace between passion and reason, between enjoyment and duty. They cancelled the deceptive *Either—Or*, and substituted *Both—And*, giving both flesh and spirit their due. The real significance of Kierkegaard became clear to John many years later. Then he saw in him the simple pietist, the ultra-Christian who wished to realise in modern society oriental ideals of two thousand years ago. But Kierkegaard was right in one point: if we were to have Christianity, we ought to have it thoroughly; but his *Either—Or* was only valid for the priests of the church who called themselves Christians.

Kierkegaard saw no further, and from him who wrote his book in 1843, and had a clerical education, one could not expect that he should say: "Either a Christianity like this, or none!" In that case

people would probably have chosen none. Instead of that Kierkegaard said : "Whether you are æsthetical or ethical you must cast yourself into the arms of Christ." His mistake was to oppose ethics and æsthetics to each other, for they can go very well together. But John did not succeed in harmonising them till, after endless struggles, at the age of thirty-seven, he attempted a compromise when he discovered that work and duty are forms of enjoyment, and that enjoyment itself, well-used, is a duty.

But at that time, the book weighed on him like a nightmare. He was angry when his friends wished to regard it as mere literature. He was not pacified by their regarding it superior in richness, depth and style to Goethe's *Faust*, which it certainly did surpass by far. John could not at that time understand that the pillar-saint Kierkegaard had himself known what enjoyment was when he wrote the first part, and that the seducer and Don Juan were the author himself, who satisfied his desires in imagination. No, he thought it was poetry.

John had been already predisposed to receive Kierkegaard's influence, and now came the other acquaintance, which would not have played a great rôle in his life if circumstances had not prepared him for that also. His companions merely regarded the person in question as ludicrous.

It came about in the following way. Thus the Jew came one day and told John that he had made the acquaintance of a genius who wished to join their Song Club,



“ Ah, a genius ! ”

None of the members of the club believed that they were geniuses, not even John, and it is doubtful whether any poet has really believed or felt that he was one. One can, when one makes comparisons, find that one has produced better work than others, and a clever man will naturally feel that he understands better than others, but genius,—that is something else. This title is not generally bestowed on any one till after death and is now dropping out of common use, since the secret of the evolution of genius has been discovered.

The novelty aroused attention, and the stranger was elected to the club under the name of Is. He ✓ was not a poet, they were told, but very learned and a powerful critic.

One evening when the club-meeting was at Thurs' rooms he came—a little thin person, without an overcoat, dressed like a labourer on his holiday. His clothes looked as though they were borrowed, for their elbows and knees were not in the right places. John, who used to succeed to his elder brother's clothes, noticed this at once. In his hand he held a dirty beer-soup-coloured hat, such as is only worn by organ-grinders. His face looked like that of a southern rat-trap seller. His black hair hung on his shoulders and a black beard fell on his breast.

“ Is it possible ? ” they asked themselves. “ Can he be a student ? ” He looked forty, but was only thirty. He stood with his hat in his hand at the door like a beggar, and hardly ventured to come forward. After Thurs had drawn him into the

room and introduced him, the meeting was declared open. Is began to speak and they listened. His voice was like a woman's and sank sometimes, without apology, to a whisper, as though the speaker demanded perfect silence or spoke for his own satisfaction. It would be difficult to repeat what he spoke of, for his speech ranged over everything that he had read, and since he had read for ten years more than the youths of twenty, they found his learning wonderful.

After that, another member of the club read a poem. Is had to deliver an opinion on it. He began with Kant, quoted Schopenhauer and Thackeray, and finished with a lecture on George Sand. No one noticed that he said nothing about the poem.

Then they went into a restaurant to eat. Is talked philosophy, æsthetics and history. He spoke sometimes with a melancholy expression in his dark unfathomable eyes, which never rested on those present, as though he sought an unseen audience far in the distance, in unknown space. The club listened reverently with absorbed attention.

John was to hear this man's opinion on his work. He, as well as one of the most poetical members of the club, began to have serious doubts as to their vocation. Often, when they had drunk a good deal, they asked whether they still believed—meaning whether each thought the other called to be a poet. It was just the same sort of doubt which John had felt when he had wondered whether he was a child of God. Is was to read John's drama,

*The Assistant at the Sacrifice*, and to give his opinion.

One morning John went up to his room to hear his verdict. Is spoke till noon. About what? About everything. But he had now taken hold of John's soul. Through conversations with Thurs, he knew which strings to pull, and did so, as he chose. He burrowed in John's mind, not out of sympathy, but from a spider-like curiosity. He did not speak directly of John's play but suggested the plan of a new one after his own ideas. He had the effect of a mesmeriser, and John was magnetised. But he felt in a state of despair when he left him, as though his friend had taken his soul, picked it to pieces and thrown them away after he had satisfied his curiosity.

But John came again, sat on the wise man's sofa, listened to his words as though they were an oracle, and felt himself completely under his power. Sometimes he thought it was a ghost who walked on the carpet when his body disappeared in clouds of tobacco-smoke. The man exercised what is called a "demonic" influence, *i. e.* inexplicable at first sight. He had no blood in his veins, no feelings, no will, no desires. He was a talking head. His standpoint was nothing and all at the same time. He was a decoction of books, and the type of a book-worm who had never lived.

Often when the other members of the club were alone, they talked about Is. Thurs was already tired of him and wondered whether he had committed some crime, for he seemed driven about by a

constant restlessness. Then it was reported that he was a poet, but never would show his poems, for he had such a high idea of the poetic art. They also wondered why no one ever saw a book in the learned man's rooms. It was also strange that he should seek the company of these youths, to whom he was so superior, and whose poetry he must despise. They who were themselves in the full bloom of romanticism did not detect the anaemic romantic who had lost his footing on firm ground. They did not see in his long hair and shabby hat the copy of Murger's Bohemian ; they did not know that this dilapidated condition was a Parisian fashion ; that this hollow wisdom was a web woven out of German metaphysics ; that this experimental psychology was derived from a peep into Kierkegaard ; and that that interesting air of hinting at uncommitted crimes and secret griefs was Byronic in origin. All this they did not understand. Therefore Is could play with John's soul and catch him in his snare. Yes, John was so thoroughly taken by him that in a speech he called himself Gamaliel, who sat at Paul's Is's) feet to learn wisdom.

The upshot of it all was that John, one fine evening, burnt his new play. It was the work of three months which went up in flames. As he collected the ashes, he wept. Is, without saying so directly, had shown him that he was no poet. So everything was a mistake, this also ! Then he felt in despair, because he had deceived his father and could take no work home to justify his neglect of his wishes. In a fit of remorse, and in order to be able to point to some

definite result, he entered his name for the written examination in Latin, without, however, having written any of the requisite preliminary exercises or essays. The Latin professor saw his name in the list and did not know it. One Sunday evening, when John had returned to his rooms in good spirits after a supper, the university bedell appeared to summon him. John went boldly to the professor and asked what he wanted.

“ You wish to take the written examination in Latin ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But I do not see your name on my list.”

“ I entered myself before for the medical examination.”

“ That has nothing to do with this. You must go by the rules.”

“ I know no rules about the three essays.”

“ I think you are impertinent, sir.”

“ It may seem so——”

“ Out with you, sir ! —or——”

The door was opened, and John was ejected. He swore to himself he would still go up for the written examination, but the next morning he overslept himself.

So even that last straw failed.

Shortly afterwards one morning a friend came and woke him.

“ Do you know that W. is dead ? ” (W. sat at the same table in the boarding-house.)

“ No ! ”

“ Yes ! he has cut his throat.”

John started up, dressed himself, and hurried with his friend to the Jernbrogatan where W. lived. They rushed up the stairs and came to a dark attic.

“ Is it here ? ”

“ No, here ! ”

John felt for a door ; the door gave way and fell upon him. At the same moment he saw a pool of blood on the ground. He turned round, let go of the door, and was at the bottom of the stairs before the door fell on the ground. This scene shook him terribly and woke his memory. Some days previously John had gone into the Carolina Park to work at his play in solitude. W. came up, greeted him, and asked whether he might bear him company or whether he disturbed him. John answered sincerely that he did disturb him, and W. went away with a melancholy air. Was it a case of a lonely drowning man who sought a companion and was repulsed ? John felt almost guilty of his death. But he was not intended for a comforter. Now the dead man seemed to haunt him ; he dared not go to his room, but slept with his friend. One night he slept with Rejd. The latter had to keep a light burning and was woken several times in the night by John, who could not sleep.

One day Rejd found John with a bottle of prussic acid. He apparently approved the idea of suicide, but first asked him to take a farewell drink with him. They went to the restaurant and ordered eight glasses of whisky, which were brought in on a tray. Each of them drank four glasses in four

pulls, with the desired result that John became dead drunk. He was carried home, but since the house door was locked, he was carried over an empty piece of ground and thrown over a fence. There he remained lying in a snow-drift, till he recovered his senses, and crept up into his room.

The last night which he spent in Upsala some days later he slept on a sofa in Thurs' rooms; his friends kept watch over him, and the room was lighted up. They watched good-naturedly till morning, then they accompanied him to the station, and put him in the coupé. When the train had passed Bergsbrunna, John breathed again. He felt as though he had left something dreadful and weird, like a northern winter night with thirty degrees of cold, behind him, and registered a vow never again to settle in this town, where men's souls, banished from life and society, grew rotten from over-production of thought, were corroded by stagnant waters which had no outlet, and took fire like millstones which revolved without having anything to grind.

## CHAPTER XI

### IDEALISM AND REALISM

(1871)

WHEN John again reached his parents' house, he felt himself in shelter like one who has reached land after a stormy sea-passage by night. Again he had quiet nights in his old tent-bed in the brothers' room. Here were quiet patient men, who came and went, worked and slept at stated times without being disturbed by dreams or ambitious designs. His sisters had grown up into young women and managed the house. All were at work with the exception of himself. When he compared his irregular, dissipated life, which knew no rest or peace, with theirs, he considered them happier and better than himself. They took life seriously, went about their work and fulfilled their duties without noise or boasting.

John now looked up his old acquaintances among the tradespeople, clerks, and sea-captains, and found intercourse with them novel and refreshing. They led his thoughts back to reality and he felt firm ground once more under his feet. At the same time he began to despise false ideality, and saw that it was vulgar of the students to look down on the "Philistines."

He now confessed quite simply and openly to his

father, but without remorse, the wretched life he had led at Upsala, and begged him to let him stay at home and prepare for his examination there,—otherwise he would be lost. His father granted permission, and now John prepared his plan of campaign for the spring term. In the first place he meant to take lessons in Latin composition with a good teacher in Stockholm, and then go up in spring, and pass the examination. Furthermore he would write his disquisition for a certificate in æsthetics and prepare for the examination in that subject. With these resolutions he began a quiet and industrious manner of life with the new year.

But the failure of his play the *Free-thinker* still weighed upon his mind, and the questions of his friends as to whether they should soon see something new from him, stirred him up to re-write, in the form of a one-act play, the drama he had burnt. He finished it, and then continued his studies.

Shortly before April he wrote a test-composition for his teacher, who declared that he would pass. His father did not disapprove of his plan when he heard that John felt quite confident, but he suggested that it would be more practical if he conformed to custom and wrote exercises for the Upsala professor. "No," said John, "it was now a question of principle and a matter of honour." So he went to Upsala.

He called on the professor on his at-home day and waited till his turn for an interview. When the latter saw him, he grew red in the face and asked :

“Are you here again ?”

“Yes.”

“What do you want ?”

“I want to go in for the Latin Composition examination.”

“Without having written a test-composition ?”

“I have done that in Stockholm—and I only want to ask whether the statutes allow me to go up for the examination.”

“The statutes ? Ask the dean about that; I only know what I require.”

John went straight to the dean, who was a young, lively and sympathetic man. John made known his purpose and described what had passed.

“Yes,” said the dean, “the statutes say nothing about the matter, but old P. can pluck you without their help.”

“Well, we shall see. Will you allow me, Mr. Dean, to go up for the written examination, that is the question ?”

“Yes, I can’t refuse that. You mean then to have your own way ?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Are you so sure about the matter ?”

“Yes.”

“Very well ! Good luck to you !” said the Dean, and clapped him on the shoulder.

So John went up for the examination and after a week received a telegram to say that he had passed. Some ascribed this result to the professor’s generosity and disapproved of John’s rebellious procedure; but John considered his success due to his own diligence

and knowledge, although he could not deny that the professor had acted honourably in not plucking him when he had the power to do so.

The examination in æsthetics was fixed for May. Contrary to all usage John sent his disquisition by post to Upsala with the written request that he might stand for the examination.

His essay was entitled "Hakon Jarl," and treated of Idealism and Realism. Its object was firstly to convince the professor that the writer was well-read in æsthetics and particularly in Danish literature, and secondly, to clear up to the writer himself his own point of view. The essay, in imitation of Kierkegaard, was in the form of a correspondence between A and B, criticising Oehlenschläger's *Hakon Jarl* and Kierkegaard's *Either—Or*.

At the appointed time John appeared before the professor, who had the reputation of being liberal-minded, but felt at once that he had no sympathy with him. With an almost contemptuous air the professor handed him back his essay and declared that it was best suited for the female readers of the *Illustrated News*. He further stated that Danish literature was not a subject of sufficient importance to be taken up as a special branch of study.

John felt annoyed, and asserted that Danish literature had greater interest for Sweden than Boileau and Malesherbes, for example, on whom students wrote essays.

His examination then began and took the form of a violent argument. It was continued in the afternoon and ended by the professor giving him

a certificate which was not so good as he had hoped, and telling him that university studies could only be properly carried on at the university. John replied that æsthetic studies could be best carried on at Stockholm where one had the National Museum, Library, Theatre, Academy of Music and Artists.

“No,” said the professor, “that is nonsense ; one ought to study here.”

John let fall some remarks on college lectures, and they parted, not as particularly good friends.

## CHAPTER XII

### A KING'S PROTÉGÉ

(1871)

DURING the whole of this time, John had been on pleasant terms with his father, and the old man had shown himself to a certain extent willing to be educated, but his tactless pride sometimes broke out and annoyed John. The latter, who was now continually at home, spent many evening hours with the old man in conversations on all sorts of subjects, and finally on religion. One day John spoke for half-an-hour about Theodore Parker, so that his father at last expressed a wish to read some of him. He kept the book for several days, but said nothing, and John found it again in his room. His father was too proud to acknowledge that he liked the book, but John learned through one of his brothers that he was especially delighted with the famous sermon "On Old Age."

In the matter of John's opposition to the professor, his father vacillated. His opinion was that right was always right, but he did not like the disrespectful way in which John spoke of the professor. Meanwhile John saw that he had won the game and that his father had a lively interest in his success.

But one day in spring John went into the country,

telling the servant that he would be absent for the day. When he returned the next morning he had an unpleasant reception.

“ You go away without telling me ? ”

“ I told the servant.”

“ I require you to ask permission of me as long as you eat my bread.”

“ Ask permission ! What nonsense ! ”

John departed, borrowed three hundred kronas from a friendly tradesman, and then with three of his club associates went to one of the islands near Stockholm, where they hired rooms in a fisher’s house at a rent of thirty kronas per month. No one tried to stop him, and probably this crisis was occasioned by the fact that John was exercising a perceptible influence on his father, brothers and sisters in matters concerning domestic arrangements. The mistress of the house feared that the power would be taken out of her hands.

He spent the summer in strenuously working for his examination, for he had now no hope of receiving further supplies from home. It was a healthy and ascetic life with innocent amusements. He went about in dressing-gown, drawers and sea-boots, and the toilette of his companions was still more scanty. They bathed, sailed, fenced, and John gave himself over increasingly to a process of decivilisation. There were almost always spirituous liquors on the table, and John feared them, for they made him mad. But to this asceticism and industry succeeded a desire to make converts of others, and a great amount of self-satisfaction. The latter is

always the case, whether the ascetic feels that in this respect he is better than others, or whether he makes the sacrifice in order to feel himself better. Therefore he preached to one brother who drank, and moralised over the others who did not work, but went to Dalarö to dance or to feast. Kierkegaard's influence was strong upon him; he wished to be moral, and thundered against æstheticism.

He now studied philology, and went through Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe. The last he hated because he was an æsthete. Behind all, like a dark background, was the breach with his father. After their life together during the last winter, he saw him as it were transfigured, justified him with respect to all that had happened in the past, and had forgotten all the petty troubles of his childhood. He missed most of all his brothers and sisters, especially his sisters whom he had really learnt to know. Toiling with a lexicon and investigating roots of words had become painful to him, but he enjoyed this pain, and disciplined his imagination by hard work, looking upon it as his professional duty.

Towards the end of the summer he was wild and shy. The clothes, which he rummaged out again, were too tight, his collar, which he had not worn for months, tormented him as though it had been of iron, and his shoes pinched him. Everything seemed to him constrained, conventional and unnatural. Once he had been enticed to an evening party at Dalarö but had immediately returned. He was shy and could not bear frivolity and laughter. This time it was not the consciousness of belonging

to the lower classes, for he had ceased to regard himself as one of them. Meanwhile the ascetic life he had been leading increased his will-power and his activity. When the next term at Upsala commenced, he took his travelling-bag and journeyed thither, without having more than a krona to call his own, and without knowing where he would find a room and something to eat. On his arrival he took up his quarters with Rejd, and set about working. The first evening, feeling half famished, he looked up Is, who had remained the whole summer alone in Upsala and seemed more melancholy than usual. His appearance was that of a shadow, and solitude had made him still more morbid. He went out with John and invited him to supper at a restaurant. He spoke in his usual style and mangled his prey, who, on the other hand, defended himself, struck back, and attacked the æsthete. Is contemplated his hungry companion while he ate, and intoxicated himself with the brandy-bottle. He adopted a maternal air and offered to lend John money. The latter was touched, thanked him, and borrowed about ten kronas, for, since he believed he had a future before him, he borrowed without fear. Finally Is became drunk and raved. He changed his attitude, called John an egoist, and reproached him for having taken the ten kronas.

To be suspected of egotism was the worst thing John knew, for Christ had taught him that the "ego" must be crucified. His individuality had grown since it had been freed from pressure and attained publicity. Conspicuous persons obtain a greater

individuality through the attention they receive, or they attract attention for the simple reason that they have a greater individuality. John felt that he was working in the right way for his future; he pressed forward with energy and will and the help of many friends, but not as a charlatan or schemer. But Is's accusation struck him in the face, as it must all men who have an "ego." He wished to return the money, but Is drew himself up proudly, played the "gentleman" and continued to romance. It struck John that this idealist was a mean fellow who behaved in this fantastic way in order to conceal his vexation at the temporary loss of the ten kronas.

Now the students returned for the term, and all of them with money. John wandered about with his travelling-bag and his books, and discovered how soon a welcome is worn out when one lies upon somebody else's sofa. He borrowed money to hire a room with. It was a real rats' nest with a camp-bed without sheets or cushions. No candlestick, nothing. But he lay in bed in his under-clothes and read by the light of a candle stuck in a bottle. His friends here and there provided him with meals. But then came the winter. He used to go out after dark and buy a quantity of wood, which he carried home in his bag. A scientific friend taught him how to make a charcoal fire. Moreover, the shaft of a chimney passed through his room and was warm every washing-day. He stood beside it with his hands behind him and read out of a book which he had placed on the chest of drawers, dragging the

latter close to him. In the meantime his drama had been played and coldly received. The subject-matter was religious. It dealt with heathendom and Christendom, the former being defended as an epoch-making movement, not as a creed. Christ was placed on one side and the only true God exalted. The drama also contained a domestic struggle, and, after the fashion of the time, women were extolled at the expense of the men. In one passage the author expressed his opinion as to the position of a poet in life. "Are you a man, Orm?" asks the duke. "I am only a poet," answers Orm. "Therefore you will never become anything," is the rejoinder.

In fact, John believed now that the poet's life was a shadow existence, that he had no individuality, but only lived in that of others. But is it then so certain that the poet possesses no individuality because he has more than one? Perhaps he is richer because he possesses more than the others. And why is it better to have only one "ego," since in any case a single "ego" is not more one's own than many "egos," seeing that even one "ego" is a compound product derived from parents, educators, social intercourse and books? Perhaps it is for this reason that society, like a machine, demands that the single "egos" shall act each like a wheel, screw, or separate piece of the machine in a limited automatic way. But the poet is more than a piece of a machine, since he is a whole machine in himself.

In the drama John had incorporated himself in five persons;—in the Jarl, who is at war with his

contemporaries ; in the Poet, who looks over things and looks through them ; in the Mother, who is angry and revengeful but whose thirst for vengeance is counteracted by her sympathy ; in the Daughter, who for the sake of her faith breaks with her father ; in the Lover, whose love is ill-starred. John understood the motives of all the *dramatis personæ* ; and spoke from their varying points of view. But a drama written for the average man who has ready-made views on all subjects, must at least take sides with one of its characters in order to win the excitable and partisan public. John could not do this, because he believed in no absolute right or wrong, for the simple reason that all these ideas are relative. One may be right as regards the future, and wrong as regards the present ; one may be wrong in one year and right in the next ; a father may justify his son while the mother condemns him ; a daughter is right in loving the man she loves, but in her father's view she is wrong in loving a heathen. There comes in doubt : Why do men hate and despise the doubter ? Because doubt is the seed of development and progress, and the average man hates development because it disturbs his quiet. Only the stupid man is certain ; only the ignorant one thinks he has found the truth. Doubt undermines energy, they say. But it is better to act without considering the consequences. The animal and the savage act blindly, obeying desire and impulse ; in that they resemble our "men of action" !

When John returned to Upsala, he was again

followed by disparaging criticisms. To some extent they were true, *e. g.* the assertion that the form of the piece was borrowed from the *Kongsemnerne*, but only to some extent, for John had taken the frigid tone and the rough phraseology direct from the Icelandic sagas, and the views of life he expressed were original. Scorn followed him, and he was regarded as a man who was ambitious of being a poet, the worst suspicion under which any one can fall.

But in the midst of his toil and needy circumstances, a week after his overthrow, there came a letter from the chamberlain of the Theatre Royal at Stockholm, requesting him to go there immediately as the king wished to see him. Morbidly suspicious he believed that it was a practical joke, and took the letter to his wise friend—the student of Natural History. The latter telegraphed in the evening to a well-known actor of the Theatre Royal requesting him to ask the chamberlain whether he had written to John. The latter spent a restless night, tossed to and fro between hope and fear. The next morning the answer came that it was indeed so and that John should come at once. He set off forthwith.

Why did he, a born rebel, accept the royal favour without hesitation? For the simple reason that he did not belong to the democratic party; he had never promised his father or mother not to receive a favour from the king. Furthermore he believed in the aristocracy or the right of the best to govern, and he considered the upper classes the best, as he

had shown in his tragedy, *Sinking Hellas*, in which he expressed contempt for the demagogues. He hated tyrants, but this king was no tyrant. Therefore there was no reason for hesitation within him or without him. Accordingly he travelled to Stockholm and was received in audience by the king. The latter was just now very ill, and looked so emaciated as to make a painful impression. He stood with a benevolent aspect, smoking his long tobacco-pipe, and smiled at the young beardless author, walking awkwardly between the rows of aide-de-camps and chamberlains. He thanked him for the pleasure which he had derived from his drama, adding that he himself when young had competed for an academical prize with a poem on the Vikings, and was fond of the old Norse legends. He said that he wished to help the young student to take his doctor's degree, and closed the interview by referring him to the treasurer, who had been ordered to make him a first payment. Later on he would receive more, and the king said he supposed there were still two or three years to elapse before he took his degree.

John's immediate future was now secure. He felt gratefully moved by this kindness on the part of a king who had so many things to think about. On his return to Upsala, he saw for two months how the court sunshine had turned him into a star. The official who had paid him, had asked him whether he thought later on of obtaining a post in some public department or in the Royal Library. His ambition had never soared so high and did not yet do so.

The chief object of human existence seems to be, and must indeed be, to spend one's life till death in the least unpleasant manner possible. This aim does not exclude solicitude for the good of others, for happiness includes the consciousness of not having infringed others' rights unnecessarily. Therefore ill-gotten wealth cannot secure a pleasant life, nor can any path which leads over the prostrate bodies of others. Accordingly Utilitarianism, or the philosophy which aims at the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is not immoral.

In spite of all his asceticism John could not help feeling happy. His happiness consisted in the half-consciousness that he could live his life without the great anxiety which the insecurity of means of existence causes. He had been threatened by penury and was now secure; life had been restored to him, and it is a happy thing to be able to live before one has done growing. His chest, which had been narrowed by hunger and over-exertion, broadened itself; his back grew straighter; life no longer seemed so melancholy. He was contented with his lot; things took on a more cheerful aspect, and he would have been ungrateful had he still remained among the malcontents.

But this did not last long. When he saw his old comrades round him in a position in which *his* happiness had effected no change, he found that there was a want of harmony between them. They had been accustomed to help him as one in need and now he needed their help no longer. They had liked him, because they protected him and were

accustomed to see him below them. But when he came upwards, near them and above them, they found him necessarily altered by altered circumstances. The necessitous man is not so bold in his opinions nor so stiff in the back as the prosperous one. He was altered for them, but was he therefore worse? Self-esteem under other circumstances is generally well thought of. Enough! He annoyed others by the fact that he was fortunate, and still more because he wished to help others to be so.

The present he had received entailed obligations, and John gave himself diligently to study. He passed his examinations in Philology, Astronomy, and Political Science, but received in none of these subjects such a good testimonial as he had expected. He had studied too much in one way and too little in another.

In examination time he generally had an attack of aphasia. Physiologists usually ascribe this weakness to an injury in the left temple. And as a matter of fact John had two scars above his left eye. One was caused by the blow of an axe, the other by a rock against which he had struck himself in jumping down the Observatory hill. He was inclined to trace to this the great difficulty he had in delivering public addresses and speaking foreign languages.

Accordingly, during examinations, he would sit there, unable to give an answer although he knew more than was asked. Then there came over him a spirit of defiance, of self-torment, of ill-humour, and he felt tempted to throw up the whole thing. He criticised the text-books and felt dishonest in

o

learning what he despised. The rôle assigned to him began to oppress him ; he longed to get away from it all to something else, wherever it might be. It was not that he regarded the king's present as a benefaction. It was a stipend, a reward for merit, such as artists at all periods have received for the purpose of carrying on their self-cultivation. His royal patron was not merely the king but his personal friend and admirer. Therefore the gift exercised no kind of restraint upon his rebellious thoughts ; he only let himself be temporarily deceived, and believed that all was right with the world, because he prospered. His radicalism had been considerably mitigated ; he no longer thought that all which was wrong in the state was the fault of the monarchy, nor did he believe with the pagans that better harvests would follow if the king was sacrificed on an idol-altar. His mother would have wept for joy at his distinction, had she lived, so strong were her aristocratic leanings.

All of us, including crown princes, are democrats, inasmuch as we wish those above us to come down to our level ; but when we ascend, we do not wish to be pulled down. The question is only whether that which is "above" us is so in a spiritual sense, and whether it ought to be there. That was what John began to be doubtful of.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WINDING UP

(1872)

AT the beginning of the spring term, John took up his quarters with an elder comrade in order to continue his studies. But when he had again the old books before him which he had already studied so long, he felt a distaste for them. His brain was full of impressions, of collected literary material, and refused to take in any more; his imagination and thought were busily at work and would not let memory be alone active; he had fits of doubt and apathy and often remained the whole day lying on the sofa. Then the desire would sometimes awake to be altogether free and to plunge into the life of activity. But the royal stipend held him fast in fetters and imposed on him obligations. Having received it, he was bound to go on studying for his doctor's degree, the course of reading for which he had half completed. So he applied himself to philosophy, but when he read the history of it, he found all systems equally valid or invalid, and his mind resisted all new ideas.

In the literary club there was disunion and lethargy. All their youthful poems had been read and no one produced any more, so that they

only met together to drink punch. Is had exposed himself, and after a scene with another member, he had been thrown out. He drew his knife and got well thrashed. He saved himself from worse by affecting to treat the affair as a joke, and was now a mere laughing-stock, since it had been discovered that his wisdom consisted in quotations from the students' periodicals which the others had not had the wit to utilise. At the beginning of term an *Æsthetic* Society had been founded by the professor of *Æsthetics*, and this made their own literary society, the "Runa," superfluous.

At one of the meetings of the former, John's discontent with classical authorities broke out. He had been drinking that evening and was half-intoxicated. In conversation with the professor dangerous ground was touched upon and John was enticed so far out of his reserve as to declare Dante without significance for humanity and overestimated. John had plenty of reasons to allege for his opinion, but could not express them to advantage when the professor set upon him, and the whole company gathered round the disputants, who were squeezed into a corner by the stove. He wanted in the first place to say that the construction of the *Divine Comedy* was not original, but a very ordinary form which had already been employed shortly before in the *Vision of Albericus*. Furthermore his opinion was that in this poem Dante did not reflect the culture and thoughts of his period, because he was so uncultured that he did not even know Greek. He was not a philosopher, for he hampered thought

by the fetters of revelation, and therefore he was no precursor of the Renaissance or the Reformation. He was no patriot, for he venerated the German empire as established by God. He was at most a local patriot of Florence. Nor was he a democrat, for he always dreamt of a union of the empire and the papacy. He did not attack the papacy, but only individual popes who lived immoral lives, as he himself had done in his youth. He was a monk, a truly idiotic child of his age, for he sent unbaptised children to hell. He was a narrow-minded royalist who put Brutus next to Satan in the deepest hell. He was entirely wanting in the power of self-criticism ;—while he reckons ingratitude to friends and betrayal of one's fatherland among the worst of crimes, he places his own friend and teacher, Brunetto Latini, in hell, and supports the German Emperor, Henry VII, against his native city Florence. He had bad literary taste, for he reckoned as the six greatest poets of the world Homer, Horace, Lucan, Ovid, Virgil and himself. How could modern critics who were so severe on all scandalous literature praise Dante, who in his poem cast dis-honour on so many contemporary persons and families ? He even scolds his own dear native city, exclaiming when he finds five nobly-born Florentines in Hell : “ Rejoice ! O Florence ! for thy name is not only great over land and sea, but also in hell. Five of thy citizens are in thieves' company ; my cheeks blush at the sight of them. But one thing I know ; punishment will light upon thee, Florence, and may it happen soon ! ”

As is usual in such debates, the attacked and the attacker often changed their ground. John wished to prove to the professor that from his point of view the *Commedia* was a political pamphlet, but then the professor veered round, adopted the enemy's point of view and said that *he* should value it as such. Whereupon John answered that it was exactly as such that he designated it, but not as a magnificent poem of everlasting value, which the professor had declared it to be in his lectures. Again the professor changed his ground, and said that the poem should be judged by the standard of the period at which it was composed.

"Exactly so," answered John, "but you have judged it by the standard of our time and all succeeding times, and therefore you are wrong. But even with regard to its own time the work is not an epoch-making one; it is not in advance of its period, but belongs strictly to it, or rather lags behind it. It is a linguistic monument for Italy, nothing more, and should never be read in a Swedish university, because the language is antiquated, and finally because it is too insignificant to be regarded as a link in the development of culture."

The result of the controversy was that John was regarded as shameless and half-cracked.

After this explosion he was exhausted and incapable of work. The whole of the life in a town where he did not feel at home was distasteful to him. His companions advised him to take a thorough rest, for he had worked too hard, and so, as a matter of fact, he had. Various schemes again presented

themselves to his mind, but without result. The grey dirty town vexed him, the scenery around depressed him; he lay on a sofa and looked at the illustrations in a German newspaper. Views of foreign scenery had the same effect as music on his mind and he felt a longing to see green trees and blue seas; he wished to go into the country but it was still only February, the sky was as grey as sack-cloth, the streets and roads were muddy. When he felt most depressed, he went to his friend the natural science student. It refreshed him to see his herbarium and microscope, his aquarium and physiological preparations. Most of all he found a pleasure in the society of the quiet, peaceable atheist, who let the world go its way, for he knew that he worked better for the future, in his small measure, than the poet with his excitable outbreaks. He had a little of the artist left in him and painted in oils. To think that he could call up as if by enchantment a green landscape amid the mists of this wintry spring and hang it on his wall ! ”

“ Is painting difficult ? ” he asked his friend.

“ No, indeed ! It is easier than drawing. Try it ! ”

John, who had already, with the greatest calm, composed a song with a guitar-accompaniment, thought it not impossible for him to paint, and he borrowed an easel, colours, and a paint-brush. Then he went home and shut himself up in his room. From an illustrated paper he copied a picture of a ruined castle. When he saw the clear blue of the sky he felt sentimental, and when he had conjured

up green bushes and grass he felt unspeakably happy as though he had eaten haschish. His first effort was successful. But now he wished to copy a painting. That was harder. Everything was green and brown. He could not make his colours harmonise with the original and felt in despair.

One day when he had shut himself up he heard a visitor talking with his friend in the next room. They whispered as though they were near a sick person. "Now he is actually painting," said his friend in a depressed tone.

What did that mean? Did they consider him cracked? Yes. He began to think about himself, and like all brooders came to the conclusion that he was cracked. What was to be done? If they shut him up, he would certainly go quite mad. "Better anticipate them," he thought, and as he had heard of private asylums in the country, where the patients could walk about and work in the garden, he wrote to the director of one of them. After some time he received a friendly answer advising him to be quiet. His correspondent had received information about John through his friend and understood his state of mind. He told him it was only a crisis which all sensitive natures must pass through, etc.

*That* danger, then, was over. But he wished to get out into active life whenever it might be.

One day he heard that a travelling theatrical company had come to the town. He wrote a letter to the manager and solicited an engagement, but he received no answer and did not call on the manager. Thus he was tossed to and fro, till at last fate inter-

vened and set him free. Three months had passed and he had received no money from the court-treasurer. His companions advised him to write and make a polite inquiry. In reply he was told that it had never been his Majesty's intention to pay him a regular pension, but only a single donation. However, in consideration of his needy circumstances, by way of exception, he had made him a grant of 200 kronas, which would shortly be sent.

John at first felt glad, for he was free, but afterwards the turn which affairs had taken made him uneasy, for the papers had stated that he was the king's stipendiary, and the king had really promised him a stipend during the year that he must read for his degree. Besides this the court-marshal had given him a sort of half promise for the future which could hardly be considered as adequately fulfilled by a donation of 200 kronas. Different opinions were expressed on the matter. Some thought that the king had forgotten, others that the state of his finances did not allow of a further gift, or that his good wishes exceeded his powers. No one expressed disapproval, and John was secretly glad, had he not felt a certain disgrace in the withdrawal of the stipend, so that he might be suspected of having groundlessly boasted of it. Those who believed that John was in disfavour at court ascribed this to the fact that he had omitted to wait upon the king in person when he was in Stockholm at Christmas and the New Year. Others attributed it to the fact that he had not formally presented his tragedy, *Sinking Hellas*, but had simply sent it to the

palace, instead of going with it, which his sense of independence forbade him to do. Ten years later he heard quite a new explanation of this disfavour. He was said to have composed a lampoon on the king. But this was a pure legend, probably the only one of its obscure fabricator which would reach posterity. Anyhow facts remained as they were and his resolve was quickly taken. He would go to Stockholm and become a literary man, an author if possible, should he prove to possess sufficient capacity for that calling.

The student who shared his room undertook to pay his return journey, and alleged as a pretext that John must wait some time in Stockholm lest the landlord should be uneasy. Meanwhile he could collect enough money to pay the rent which was due at the end of the term.

His friends gave John a farewell feast and John thanked them, acknowledging the obligations which each owes to those he meets in social intercourse. Every personality is not developed simply out of itself, but derives something from each with whom it comes in contact, just as the bee gathering her honey from a million flowers, appropriates it and gives it out as her own.

Thus he stepped into life, abandoning dreams and the past to live in reality and the present. But he was ill-prepared and the university is not the proper school for life. He felt also that the decisive hour had come. In a clumsy speech he called the feast a “*svensexa*,” *i. e.* a farewell supper for a bachelor on the eve of his marriage, for he was now to be a

man and leave boyhood behind; he was to become a member of society, a useful citizen and eat his own bread.

So he believed at the time, but he soon discovered that his education had unfitted him for society, and as he did not wish to be an outlaw the doubt awoke in him whether society, of which after all school and university were a part, was not to blame for his education, and whether it had not serious defects which needed a remedy.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AMONG THE MALCONTENTS

(1872)

WHEN John came to Stockholm, he borrowed money in order to hire a room near the Ladugårdslanet. Always under the sway of sentiment, he chose this quarter of the town because he always used to walk there in his childhood on the 1st of May, and the High Street especially had something of a holiday air about it. Moreover it soon opened into the Zoological Gardens, which became his favourite place for walks. The barracks with their drums and trumpets had something exhilarating about them, and there were fine views over the sea which was close at hand. There was plenty of light and air. When he went for his morning walk he could choose his route according to his mood. If he was sad and depressed, he went along the Sirishofsvägen ; if he was cheerful he turned off to the level ground of Manilla, where the paradisiacal rose-valley exhaled joy and delight ; if he was despairing and anxious to avoid people he went out to Ladugårdsgärdet, where no one could disturb his self-communings and his prayers to God. Sometimes, when his soul was in a tumult, he remained standing by the cross-ways above the bridge near the Zoological Gardens, irreso-

lute which way to take. On such occasion a thousand forces seemed to pull him in all directions.

His room was very simple and commanded no view. It smelt of poverty, as the whole house did, in which the only person of standing was the deputy-landlord, a policeman. John began his active career by painting, out of a sense of need to give his feelings shape and to express them in a palpable way, for the little letters huddled together on the paper were dead and could not express his mind so plainly and simultaneously. He did not think of being a painter in order to exhibit or sell pictures. To step to the easel was for him just like sitting down and singing. At the same time he renewed his acquaintance with his friend the sculptor, who introduced him to a circle of young painters. These were all discontent with the Academy and the antiquated methods which could not express their vague dreams. They still preserved the Bohemian type, so late did the waves of modern ideas beat on the far coasts of the North. They wore long hair, slouched hats, brilliant cravats, and lived like the birds of heaven. They read and quoted Byron and dreamt of enormous canvases and subjects such as no studio could contain. A sculptor and a Norwegian had conceived the idea of hewing a statue out of the Dovre rock; a painter wished to paint the sea not merely as a level, but with such a wide horizon as to show the convex curve of the globe.

This took John's fancy. One should give expression to one's inner feelings and not depict mere sticks and stones which are meaningless in them-

selves till they have passed through the alembic of a percipient mind. Therefore the artists did not make studies out of doors, but painted at home from their memory and imagination. John always painted the sea with a coast in the foreground, some gnarled pine-trees, a couple of rocky islets in the distance and a white-painted buoy. The atmosphere was generally gloomy, with a weak or strong light on the horizon ; it was always sunset or moonlight, never clear daylight.

But he was soon woken out of this dream-life partly by hunger, partly by recollecting the reality which he had sought in order to save himself from his dreams.

Although John knew little of contemporary politics, he knew that the democracy or peasant-class had arrived at power, that they had declared war on the official and middle classes, and that they were hated in Upsala. And now he himself was to enter the ranks of the combatants and attack the old order of things. The only item of the knowledge which he had brought with him from Upsala which was likely to be useful here, was the small amount of political science which he had studied. Of what use were Astronomy, Philology, *Æsthetics*, Latin and Chemistry here ? He knew something about the land-laws and communal-laws, but had no idea of political economy, finance or jurisprudence. When he now began to look about for a suitable paper to which to attach himself, it did not occur to him to make use of his old connection with the *Aftonbladet*, but he wrote for a small evening paper which had lately

appeared, which was regarded as radical and was issued by the New Liberal Union. The editor held receptions in the *La Croix* Café, and here John was introduced into the society of journalists. He felt ill at ease among them. They did not think as he did, seemed uncultivated, as indeed they were, and rather gossiped than discussed important matters. They certainly busied themselves with facts, but these were rather trifles than great questions. They were full of phrases, but did not seem to have a proper command of their material. John, though against his will, was too much of an academic aristocrat to sympathise with these democrats, who for the most part had not chosen their career, but been forced into it by the pressure of circumstances. He found the atmosphere stifling for his idealism, and came no more to the receptions after he had done his business, and been invited to write for the paper.

He made his *début* as an art-critic. His first criticism concerned Winge's "Thor with the giants" and Rosen's "Eric XIV and Karin Monsdotter." The young critic naturally wished to display his learning, though all he had was what he had picked up in lectures and books. Therefore his criticism of Winge was a mere eulogy. His remarks chiefly regarded the subject of the picture as a Norse one and treated in the grand style. The painters did not like this sort of criticism, as they considered the only point to be criticised in a work of art was the execution. "Eric the XIV" he judged from his monomaniacal point of view, "aristocrat or democrat," and found fault with the incorrect conception

of Göran Persson, whom in his own tragedy *Eric XIV* (subsequently burnt) he had represented as an enemy of the nobility and friend of the people.

Descended from his own height as a promising student, author and royal protégé to the then less regarded class of journalists, he felt himself again one of the lower orders.

After the editor had struck out his learned flourishes, the articles were printed. The editor told him they were piquant, but advised him to employ a more flowing style. He had not yet caught the journalistic knack.

Then John planned a series of articles in which, under the title "Perspective," he treated of social and economic questions. In these he attacked university life, the divisions of the classes, the injurious over-reading and the unfortunate position of the students. Since the labour-question at that time was not a burning one, he ventured on a comparison between the prospects of a student and that of a workman, declaring the latter to be far better off. The workman was generally in good health, could support himself at eighteen and marry at twenty, while the student could not think of marriage and making a livelihood before thirty. As a remedy he recommended doing away with the final examination as Jaabaek had already done in Norway, and the transference of the university to Stockholm in order that the students might have a chance of earning something during their course. As an example he adduced the case of modern students at Athens who learn a trade while they study. This

was all clear to him as early as 1872, yet when he made similar suggestions twelve years later, he was thought to have conceived them on the spur of the moment.

At the same time he took an engagement on a small illustrated ladies' paper and wrote biographical notices and novelettes. The ladies were very kind, but let him work too hard, and gave him all kinds of commissions to execute. After he had spent two or three days in paying visits, dived into a publisher's place of business, read biographical romances in three or four volumes, made researches in the library, run to the printing-office and finally written his columns carefully, setting each person treated of in a proper historical light, and analysing his career, he received, for all that work, fifteen kronas. He calculated that this was less pay per hour than a servant earned. The bread of the literary man was certainly hardly earned, and that this is the common lot of authors does not make matters better. But the profession was also despised, and John felt that in social position he stood below his brothers who were tradesmen, below the actors, yes, even below the elementary school-teachers.

The journalists led a subterranean existence, but they styled themselves "we" and wrote as though they were sovereigns of God's appointment ; they had men's weal or woe in their hand, since the chief weapon in the struggle for existence in our civilised days is social reputation. How was it that society had given these free lances such terrible power without taking any guarantees ? But when one

comes to think, what assurance is there for the capacity and insight of the law-givers in parliament, in the ministry, on the throne ? None whatever ! It is therefore the same all round. There were, however, two classes of newspapers ; the conservative, which wished to preserve the social condition with all its defects, and the liberal, which wished to improve it. The former enjoyed a certain respect, the latter, none at all. John instinctively sided with the last, and at once felt that he was regarded as every one's enemy. A liberal journalist and a chronicler of scandals were synonymous terms. At home he had heard the usual phrase that " no one was honourable whose name had not appeared in the paper *Fatherland*." In the street they had pointed out to him a man who looked like a bandit, with the mark of a dagger-stab between his eyes, and said, " There goes the journalist X." In the Café La Croix he felt depressed among his new colleagues, but none the less chose to associate with this unpopular group. Did he choose really ? One does not choose one's impulses, and it is no virtue to be a democrat when one hates the upper classes and has no pleasure in their company.

Meanwhile for social intercourse he went to the artists. It was a strange world in which they lived. There was so much nature among these men who busied themselves with art. They dressed badly, lived like beggars—one of them lived in the same room with the servant—and ate what they could get ; they could hardly read, and had no knowledge of orthography. At the same time they talked like

cultivated people, they looked at things from an independent point of view, were keenly observant and unfettered by dogmas. One of them four years previously had minded geese, a second had wielded the smith's hammer, a third had been a farmer's servant and walked behind the dung-cart, and a fourth had been a soldier. They ate with knives, used their sleeves as napkins, had no handkerchiefs and only one coat in winter. However, John felt at home with them, though of late years he had been conversant only with cultivated and well-to-do young people. It was not that he was superior to them, for that they did not acknowledge, nor was it any use to quote books to them, for they accepted no authority. His doubts as regards books, especially text-books, began to be aroused, and he began to suspect that old books may injure a modern man's thinking powers. This doubt became a certainty when he met one of the group whom all regarded as a genius.

He was a painter about thirty years old, formerly a farmer's servant who had come to the Academy in order to become an artist. After he had spent some time in the painting school he came to the conclusion that art was insufficient as a medium for expressing his thoughts, and he lived now on nothing, while he busied himself by reflecting on the questions of the time. Badly educated at an elementary school, he had now flung himself on the most up-to-date books and had a start of John, since he had begun where the latter had left off. Between John and him there was the same difference as between a mathe-

matician and a pilot. The former can calculate in logarithms, the latter can turn them to practical use. But Måns also was critically disposed and did not believe in books blindly. He had no ready-made scheme or system into which to fit his thoughts ; he always thought freely, investigated, sifted and only retained what he recognised as tenable. More free from passions than John, he could draw more reckless inferences, even when they went against his own wishes and interests, though with certain matter-of-course limitations. He was moreover prudent, as indeed he must have been to have worked himself up from such a low position, and understood how to be silent as to certain conclusions, which, if expressed tactlessly and in the wrong place, might have injured him. As his literary adviser, he had a telegraph-assistant whose knowledge Måns knew better how to use than its owner himself ; the latter had not a very lively intellect, although in his knowledge of languages he possessed the key to the three great modern literatures. Passionless and self-conscious, with a strong control over his impulses, he stood outside everything, contemplating and smiling at the free play of thought which he enjoyed as a work of art, with the accompanying certainty that it was after all only an illusion.

With both of these John had many friendly disputes. When he drew up his schemes for the future of men and society he could rouse Måns' enthusiasm and carry him along with him, but when he had taken his hearer a certain way with his emotional and passionate descriptions, the latter took

out his microscope, found the weak spot where to insert his knife, and cut. On such occasions John was impatient and motioned his opponent away. "You are a pedant," he said, "and fasten on details."

But sometimes it turned out that the "detail" was a premise the excision of which made the whole grand fabric of inference collapse. John was always a poet, and had he continued as such unhindered he might have brought it to something. The poet can speak to the point like the preacher, and that is an advantageous position. He can rattle on without being interrupted, and therefore he can persuade if not convince. It was through these two unlearned men that John learned a philosophy which was not known at Upsala. In the course of conversation, his opponents often referred to an authority whom they called "Buckle." John rejected an authority of whom he had heard nothing in Upsala. But the name continually recurred and worried him to such an extent that he at last asked his friends to lend him the book. The effect of reading it was such that John regarded his acquaintance with the book as the vestibule of his intellectual life. Here there was an atmosphere of pure naked truth. So it should be and so it was. Man, like all other organised beings, was under the control of natural laws; all so-called spiritual qualities rest on a material basis, and chemical affinities are as spiritual as the sympathies of souls. The whole of speculative philosophy which wished to evolve laws from the inner consciousness was only a better kind of theology, and what was worse, an inquisition, which wished

to confine the manysidedness of the world-process within the limits of an individual system. "No system" is Buckle's motto. Doubt is the beginning of all wisdom, doubt means investigation and stimulates intellectual progress. The truth which one seeks is simply the discovery of natural laws. Knowledge is the highest, morality is only an accidental form of behaviour, which depends upon different social conventions. Only knowledge can make men happy, and the simple-minded or ignorant with their moral strivings, their benevolence and their philanthropy are only injurious or useless.

And now he drew the necessary conclusions. Heavenly love and its result, marriage, is conditioned as to that result by such a prosaic matter as the price of provisions; the rate of suicide varies with wages, and religion is conditioned by natural scenery, climate and soil. His mind was predisposed to receive the new doctrines, and now they made their triumphant entry. John had always planted his feet firmly on the earth, and neither the balloon-voyages of poetry nor the will-o'-the-wisps of German philosophy had found a sincere adherent in him.

- ✓ He had sat in despair over Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, and asked himself with curiosity, whether it was he who was so stupid or Kant who was so obscure. The study of the history of philosophy, in which he had seen how each philosopher pointed to his system as the true one, and championed it against others, had left him amazed. Now it was clear to him that the idealists who mingle their obscure perceptions with clear presentations of facts

were only savages or children, and that the realists, who were alone capable of clear perceptions, were the most highly developed in the scale of creation. The poets and philosophers are somnambulists, and the religious who always live in fear of the unknown are like animals in a forest who fear every rustle in the bushes, or like primitive men who sacrificed to the thunder instead of erecting lightning rods.

Now he had a weapon in his hand to wield against the old authorities and against the schools and universities which were enslaved by patronage. Buckle himself had run away from school, had never been at a university, and hated them. Apropos of Locke he remarks, "Were this deep thinker now alive, he would inveigh against our great universities and schools, where countless subjects are learnt which no one needs, and which few take the trouble to remember."

Accordingly Upsala had been wrong, and John right. He knew that there were ignorant savants there, and that it was on account of their own want of culture that the professors of philosophy could teach nothing but German philosophy. They neither knew English nor French philosophy for the simple reason that they only understood Latin and German. Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England* was written in 1857, but did not reach Sweden till 1871-72. Even then the soil was not ready for the seed. The learned critics were unfavourable to Buckle, and the seed took root only in some young minds who had no authoritative voice.

"No literature," says Buckle himself, "can be useful to a people, if they are not prepared to receive it." Thus it was with Buckle and his work, which preceded that of Darwin (1858) and contained all its inferences—a proof that evolution in the world of thought is not so strictly conditioned as has been believed. Buckle did not know Mill or Spencer, whose thoughts now rule the world, but he said most of what they said subsequently.

Now, if John had had a character, *i. e.* if he had been ruled by a single quiet purpose directed towards one object, he would have extracted from Buckle all that answered his purpose and left out all that told against it. But he was a truth-seeker and did not shrink from looking into the abyss of contradictions, especially as Buckle never asserted that he had found the truth, and because truth is relative and it is often found on both sides. Doubt, criticism, inquiry are the chief matter, and the only useful course to pursue, as they guarantee liberty. Sermons, programmes, certainty, system, "truth" are various forms of constraint and stupidity. But it is impossible to be a consistent doubter when one is crammed full with "complete evidence," and when one's judgment is swayed by class-prejudice, anxiety for a living and struggles for a position. John became calm when he learnt that all that was wrong in the world was wrong in accordance with necessary law, but he became furious when he made the further discovery that our social condition, our religion and morality were absurdities. He wished to understand and pardon his opponents, since in their

actions they were no more free than he was, but he was in duty bound to strangle them since they hindered the evolution of society towards universal happiness, and that was the only and greatest crime that could be committed. But as there were no criminals, how could one get hold of the crime ?

He was rejoiced that the mistakes had now been discovered, but despair oppressed him again when he saw that the discovery was premature. Nothing could be done for many years to come. Social evolution was a very slow process. Consequently he must lie at anchor in the roadstead waiting for the tide. But this waiting was too long for him ; he heard an inner voice bidding him speak, for if one does not spread what light one has, how can popular views be changed ? Yes, but a premature promulgation of new ideas can do no good. Thus he was tossed to and fro. Everything round him now seemed so old and out of date that he could not read a newspaper without getting an attack of cramp. *They* only had regard to the present moment ; no one thought of the future. His philosophical friend comforted and calmed him, through, among other sayings, a sentence of La Bruyère, “ Don’t be angry because men are stupid and bad, or you will have to be angry because a stone falls ; both are subject to the same laws ; one must be stupid and the other fall.”

“ That is all very well,” said John, “ but think of having to be a bird and live in a ditch ! Air ! light ! I cannot breathe or see,” he exclaimed ; “ I suffocate ! ”

" Write ! " answered his friend.

" Yes, but what ? "

Where should he begin ? Buckle had already written everything, and yet it was as though it had not been written. The worst thing was that he felt he lacked the power. Hitherto he had only felt a very moderate degree of ambition. He did not wish to march at the head, to be a conqueror and so on. But to go in front with an axe as a simple pioneer, to fell trees, root up thickets, and let others build bridges and throw up redoubts, was enough for him. It is often observable that great ambition is only the sign of great power. John was moderately ambitious, because he was now only conscious of moderate powers. Formerly when he was young and strong he had great confidence in himself. He was a fanatic, *i. e.* his will was supported by powerful passions, but his awakened insight and healthy doubt had sobered his self-confidence. The work before him took the form of rock-walls which must be pulled down, but he was not so simple as to venture on the task.

Now he began to habituate himself forcibly to doubt in order to be patient and not to explode. He entrenched himself in doubt as in a fortress, and as a means of self-preservation he determined to depict his struggles and doubts in a drama. The subject matter which he had been turning over in his mind for a year he took from the history of the Reformation in Sweden. Thus was composed the drama later on known as *The Apostate*.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE RED ROOM

(1872)

IN autumn occurred the death of Charles XV. With the mourning, which was fairly sincere and widespread, there mingled gloomy anxieties for the future. One of the young painters who belonged to John's circle of friends had just received a royal stipend and gone to Norway. He had now to return quite destitute and without any prospects for the future. John was accustomed to go with him into the Zoological Gardens in order to paint, and occupy his mind while he was waiting for an answer from the theatrical manager to whom he had sent his drama.

There is indeed no occupation which so absorbs all the thoughts and emotions so much as painting. John watched and enjoyed the delicate harmonies of the lines in the branch-formation of the trees, in the wave-like curves of the ground, but his paint-brush was too coarse to reproduce the contours as he wished. Then he took his pen and made a drawing in detail. But when he tried to transfer it to his canvas and paint it, the whole appeared but a smudge.

Pelle, on the other hand, was an impressionist

and took no notice of details. He took up the landscape at a stroke, so to speak, and gave the colours their due value, but the various objects melted into uncertain silhouettes. John thought Pelle's landscapes more beautiful than the reality, although he cherished great reverence for the works of the Creator. After he had wiled away about a month in painting, he went one evening into the *Café La Croix*. The first person he met was his former editor, who said, "I have just heard from X." (a young author) "that the *Theatre Royal* has refused *The Apostate*."

"I know nothing about it," answered John. He did not feel well and left the company as soon as possible. The next day he went to his former instructor to find how the matter stood. The latter began first to praise, and then to criticise it, which is the right method. He said that the characters of Olaus Petri and Gustav Wassa had been brought down from their proper level and distorted. John, on the other hand, held that he had given a realistic representation of them as they probably were, before their figures had been idealised by patriotic considerations. His friend replied that that was no good; the public would never accept a new reading of their characters till critical inquiry had done its preliminary work.

That was true, but the blow was a heavy one, although dealt with as much consideration as possible, and the author was invited to remodel his drama. He had again been premature in his attempt. There was nothing left for him but to

wait and wile away the time. To think of remodelling it now was not possible for him, for he saw, when he read it through again, that it was all cast in one piece and that the details could not be altered. He could not change it, unless he changed his thoughts, and therefore he must wait.

Now he took to reading again. Chance brought into his hand two of "the best books which one can read." They were De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and Prévost-Paradol's *The New France*. The former increased his doubts as to the possibility of democracy in an uncultivated community. Written with sincere admiration for the political institutions of America, which the author holds up as a pattern for Europe, this work points out so sincerely the dangers of democracy, as to make even a born hater of the aristocracy pause.

John's theories received terrible blows, but this time his good sense triumphed over his prejudices. His loss of faith in his own powers, however, had a demoralising effect upon him, and he was soon ripe for absolute scepticism. Sentences such as the following admitted at that time of no contradiction : "The moral power of the majority is based partly upon the conviction that a number of men have more understanding, intelligence and wisdom than an individual, and a great number of lawgivers more than a selection of them. That is the principle of equality applied to intellectual gifts. This doctrine attacks the pride of humanity in its innermost citadel."

An individualist like John did not perceive that

this pride can and must be overcome. Nor did he see that wisdom and intelligence can be spread by means of good schools among the masses.

"When a man or a party in the United States suffers injustice, to whom shall he turn? To public opinion? That is the opinion of the majority. To the legislative officials? They are nominated by the majority and obey it blindly. To the executive power? That is chosen by the majority and serves it as a passive instrument. To the military forces of the State? They are simply the majority under arms. To juries? They are formed by a majority which possesses the right to judge." De Tocqueville goes on to say that the happiness of the majority which consists in maintaining its rights deserves recognition, and that it is better for a minority to suffer from pressure than a majority, but the sufferings which an intelligent minority suffer from an unintelligent majority are much greater than those which an intelligent minority inflict upon a majority. On the other hand, the minority understands much better than the majority what conduces to their own and the general happiness, and therefore the tyranny of the minority is not to be compared with that of the majority.

"Yes, but," thought John, "did not the European peoples generally suffer from the tyranny of a minority?" The mere fact that there were upper classes lay like a heavy cloud on the life of the masses. Nowadays the question may be raised, "Why should a different class-education result in an

intelligent minority and an unintelligent majority ? ” But such questions were not raised then. Moreover had such a state really ever been seen in which an intelligent minority had the power to “ oppress ” ? No, for sovereigns, ministers and parliaments had usually the due modicum of intelligence.

That which more than anything else inclined John to fear the power of the masses, was the fact noted by De Tocqueville that they tyrannised over freedom of thought.

“ When one tries to ascertain,” he says, “ how much freedom of thought there is in the United States it becomes apparent how much the tyranny of the masses transcends any despotism known to Europe. I know no country where there is, generally speaking, less independence of opinion and real freedom of discussion than America. The majority draw a terribly narrow circle round all thought. Within that circle an author may say what he likes, but woe to him if he step across the limit. He has no *auto-da-fé* to fear, but he is made the mark for all kinds of unpleasantness and daily persecutions. Every good quality is denied him, even honour. Before he published his views, he thought he had adherents ; after he has made them known to all the world he sees that he no longer has any, for his critics have raised an outcry, and those who thought as he did, but lacked the courage to express themselves, are silent and withdraw. He gives way ; he finally collapses under the strain of daily renewed effort, and resumes silence, as though he regretted having spoken the truth.

" In democratic republics, tyranny lets the body alone and attacks the soul. In them the dominant power does not say, ' You must think as I do, or die ; ' it says, ' You are free to differ from me in opinion ; your life and property will remain untouched, but from the day that you express a different view from mine, you will be a stranger among us. You will retain your rights and privileges as a citizen, but they will be useless to you. You will remain among men, but be deprived of all a man's rights. When you approach your equals they will flee you as though you were a leper ; even those who believe in your innocence will abandon you, lest they should be themselves abandoned. Go in peace ! I grant you life, but a life which shall be harder and bitterer than death ! ' "

That is the true and credible picture which the noble De Tocqueville, friend of the people and tyrant-hater as he was, has drawn of the tyranny of the masses, those masses whose feet John had felt trampling on him at home, at school, in the steamer and the theatre, those masses whom he had satirised in the play *Sinking Hellas*, and whom he had described as throwing the first stone at Olaus Petri just at the moment when he was preaching to them of freedom ! If it is thus in America, how can one expect anything better in Europe. He found himself in a cul-de-sac. His hereditary disposition prevented his becoming an aristocrat, nor could he come to terms with the people. Had he not himself suffered lately from an ignorant theatre-management behind which stood the un-

cultivated public, and found the way blocked for his new and liberal ideas. There was then already a mob-despotism in Sweden, and the director of the Theatre Royal was only their servant.

It was all absurdity ! And even suppose society were ruled by those who knew most. Then they would be under professors with their heads full of antiquarian ideas. Even if the director had put his drama on the stage, it would have certainly been hissed off by the tradesmen in the stalls, and no critics could have helped him !

His thoughts struggled like fishes in a net, and ended by being caught. It was not worth the trouble of thinking about and he tried to banish the thought, but could not. He felt a continual trouble and despair in his mind that the world was going idiotically, majestically and unalterably to the devil. "Unalterably," he thought, for as yet a large number of strong minds had not attacked the problem, which was soluble after all. Ten years later it was provisionally solved, when knowledge on the subject of this sphinx-riddle had been so widely spread that even a workman had obtained some insight into it, and in a public meeting had declared that equality was impossible, for the block-heads could not be equal to the sharp-sighted, and that the utmost one could demand was equality of position. This workman was more of an aristocrat than John dared to be in the year 1872, though he belonged to no party which claimed the right to muzzle him.

Prévost-Paradol had dealt with the same theme

Q

as Tocqueville, but he suggested a secret device against the tyranny of the masses—the cumulative vote or the privilege of writing the same name several times on the ballot-paper. But John considered this method, which had been tried in England, doubtful.

He had set great hopes on his drama, and borrowed money on the strength of them, and now felt much depressed. The disproportion between his fancied and his real value galled him. Now he had to adopt a rôle, learn it, and carry it out. He composed one for himself, consisting of the sceptic, the materialist and the liar, and found that it suited him excellently. This was for the simple reason that it was a sceptical and materialistic period, and because he had unconsciously developed into a man of his time. But he still believed that his earlier discarded personality, ruled indeed by wild passions, but cherishing ideals of a higher calling, love to mankind and similar imaginations, was his true and better self which he hid from the world. All men make similar mistakes when they value sickly sentimentality above strong thought, when they look back to their youth and think they were purer and more virtuous then, which is certainly untrue. The world calls the weaker side of men their "better self," because this weakness is more advantageous for the world and self-interest seems to dictate its judgment. John found that in his new rôle he was freed from all possible prejudices—religious, social, political and moral. He had only one opinion,—that everything was absurd, only one

conviction,—that nothing could be done at present, and only one hope,—that the time would come when one might effectively intervene, and when there would be improvement. But from that time he altogether gave up reading newspapers. To hear stupidity praised, selfish acts lauded as philanthropic, and reason blasphemed,—that was too much for a fanatical sceptic. Sometimes, however, he thought that the majority were right in just being at the point of view where they were, and that it was unnecessary that some few individuals, because of a specialised education, should run far ahead of the rest. In quiet moments he recognised that his mental development which had taken place so rapidly, without his ever seeing an idea realised, could be a pattern for such a slowly-working machine as society is. Why did he run so far ahead ? It was not the fault of the school or university, for they had held him back equally with the majority.

Yes, but those already out in the world, by their own hearths, had already reached the stage of Buckle's scepticism as regards the social order, so that he was not so far ahead after all. The slow rate of progress was enough to make one despair. What Schiller's Karl Moor had seen a hundred years previously, what the French Revolution had actually brought about were now regarded as brand-new ideas. After the Revolution, social development had gone backwards ; religious superstitions were revived, belief in a better state of things lost, and economic and industrial progress was accompanied by sweating and terrible poverty. It was absurd !

All minds that were awake at all had to suffer,—suffer like every living organism when hindered in growth and pressed backward. The century had been inaugurated by the destruction of hopes, and nothing has such a paralysing effect on the soul as disappointed hope, which, as statistics show, is one of the most frequent causes of madness. Therefore all great spirits were, vulgarly speaking, mad. Chateaubriand was a hypochondriac, Musset a lunatic, Victor Hugo a maniac. The automatic pygmies of everyday life cannot realise what such suffering means, and yet believe themselves capable of judging in the matter.

The ancient poet is psychologically correct in representing Prometheus as having his liver gnawed by a vulture. Prometheus was the revolutionary who wished to spread mental illumination among men. Whether he did it from altruistic motives, or from the selfish one of wishing to breathe a purer mental atmosphere, may be left undecided. John, who felt akin to this rebel, was aware of a pain which resembled anxiety, and a perpetual boring "tooth-ache in the liver." Was Prometheus then a liver-patient who confusedly ascribed his pain to causes outside himself? Probably not! But he was certainly embittered when he saw that the world is a lunatic asylum in which the idiots go about as they like, and the few who preserve reason are watched as though dangerous to the public safety. Attacks of illness can certainly colour men's views, and every one well knows how gloomy our thoughts are when we have attacks of fever. But patients

such as Samuel Oedmann or Olaf Eneroth were neither sulky nor bitter, but, on the contrary, mild, perhaps languid from want of strength. Voltaire, who was never well, had an imperturbably good temper. And Musset did not write as he did because he drank absinthe, but he drank from the same cause that he wrote in that manner, *i. e.* from despair. Therefore it is not in good faith that idealists who deny the existence of the body, ascribe the discontent of many authors to causes such as indigestion, etc., the supposition of which contradicts their own principles, but it must be against their better knowledge, or with worse knowledge. Kierkegaard's gloomy way of writing can be ascribed to an absurd education, unfortunate family relations, dreary social surroundings, and alongside of these to some organic defects, but not to the latter alone.

Discontent with the existing state of things will always assert itself among those who are in process of development, and discontent has pushed the world forwards, while content has pushed it back. Content is a virtue born of necessity, hopelessness or superfluity; it can be cancelled with impunity.

Catarrh of the stomach may cause ill temper, but it has never produced a great politician, *i. e.* a great malcontent. But sickliness may impart to a malcontent's energy a stronger colour and greater rapidity, and therefore cannot be denied a certain influence. On the other hand, a conscious insight into grievances can produce such a degree of mental annoyance as can result in sickness. The loss of dear friends through death, may in this

way cause consumption, and the loss of a social position or of property, madness.

If every modern individual shows a geological stratification of the stages of development through which his ancestors passed, so in every European mind are found traces of the primitive Aryan,—class-feeling, fixed family ideas, religious motives, etc. From the early Christians we have the idea of equality, love to our neighbour, contempt for mere earthly life; from the mediæval monks, self-castigation and hopes of heaven. Besides these, we inherit traits from the sensuous cultured pagans of the Renaissance, the religious and political fanatics of the sixteenth century, the sceptics of the "illumination" period, and the anarchists of the Revolution. Education should therefore consist in the obliteration of old stains which continually reappear however often we polish them away.

John proceeded to obliterate the monk, the fanatic and the self-tormentor in himself as well as he could, and took as the leading principle of his provisional life (for it was only provisional till he struck out a course for himself) the well-understood one of personal advantage, which is actually, though unconsciously, employed by all, to whatever creed they belong.

He did not transgress the ordinary laws, because he did not wish to appear in a court of justice; he encroached on no one's rights because he wished his own not to be encroached upon. He met men sympathetically, for he did not hate them, nor did he study them critically till they had broken

their promises and shown a want of sympathy to him. He justified them all so long as he could, and when he could not, well,—he could not, but he tried by working to place himself in a position to be able to do so. He regarded his talent as a capital sum, which, although at present it yielded no interest, gave him the right and imposed on him the duty to live at any price. He was not the kind of man to force his way into society in order to exploit it for his own purposes, he was simply a man of capacity conscious of his own powers, who placed himself at the disposal of society modestly, and in the first place to be used as a dramatist. The theatre, as a matter of fact, needed him to contribute to its Swedish repertory.

After a solitary day's work, it was his habit to go to a *café* to meet his acquaintances there. To seek "more elevated" recreations in family circles such as meaningless gossip, card playing and such like had no attraction for him. Whenever he entered a family circle he felt himself surrounded by a musty atmosphere like that exhaled from stagnant water. Married couples who had been badgering each other, were glad to welcome him as a sort of lightning conductor, but he had no pleasure in playing that part. Family life appeared to him as a prison in which two captives spied on each other, as a place in which children were tormented, and servant-girls quarrelled. It was something nasty from which he ran away to the restaurants. In them there was a public room where no one was guest and no one was host : one

enjoyed plenty of space and light, heard music, saw people and met friends. John and his friends were accustomed to meet in a back room of Bern's great restaurant which, because of the colour of the furniture, was called the "red room." The little club consisted originally of John and a few artistic and philosophical friends. But their circle was soon enlarged by old friends whom they met again. They were first of all recruited by the presentable former scholars of the Clara School,—a postal clerk who was at the same time a bass singer, pianist and composer; a secretary of the Court treasurer; and the trump card of the society,—a lieutenant of artillery. To these were added later, the composer's indispensable friend, a lithographer, who published his music, and a notary who sang his compositions. The club was not homogeneous, but they soon managed to shake down together.

But since the laymen had no wish to hear discussions on art, literature and philosophy, their conversations were only on general subjects. John, who did not wish to discuss any more problems, adopted a sceptical tone, and baffled all attempts at discussion by a play upon words, a quibble or a question. His ultimate "why?" behind every penultimate assertion threw a light on the too-sure conclusions of stupidity, and let his hearer surmise that behind the usually accepted commonplaces there were possibilities of truths stretching out in endless perspective. These views of his must have germinated like seeds in most of their brains, for in

a short time they were all sceptics, and began to use a special language of their own. This healthy scepticism in the infallibility of each other's judgments had, as a natural consequence, a brutal sincerity of speech and thought. It was of no use to speak of one's feelings as though they were praiseworthy, for one was cut short with "Are you sentimental, poor devil? Take bi-carbonate."

If any one complained of toothache, all he received by way of answer was, "That does not rouse my sympathy at all, for I have never had toothache, and it has no effect upon my resolve to give a supper."

They were disciples of Helvetius in believing that one must regard egotism as the mainspring of all human actions, and therefore it was no use pretending to finer emotions. To borrow money or to get goods on credit without being certain of being able to pay, was rightly regarded as cheating, and so designated. For instance, if a member of the club appeared in a new overcoat which seemed to have been obtained on credit, he was asked in a friendly way, "Whom have you cheated about that coat?" Or on another occasion another would say, "To-day I have done Samuel out of a new suit."

Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, both overcoat and suit were generally paid for, but as the purchaser at the time he took them was not sure whether he would be able to pay, he regarded himself as a potential swindler. This was severe morality and stern self-criticism.

Once during such a conversation the lieutenant got up to go and attend church-parade with his company. "Where are you going?" he was asked. "To play the hypocrite," he answered truthfully.

This tone of sincerity sometimes assumed the character of a deep understanding of human nature and the nature of society. One day the company were leaving John's lodgings for the restaurant. It was winter, and Måns, who was generally ill-dressed, had no overcoat. The lieutenant, who wore his uniform, was, it is true, somewhat uneasy, but did not wish to hurt any one's feelings that day. When John opened the door to go out, Måns said, "Go in front; I will come afterwards; I do not want Jean to injure his position by going with me."

John offered to walk with Måns one way while the others should go by another, but Jean exclaimed, "Ah! don't pretend to be noble-minded! you feel as embarrassed at going with Måns as I do."

"True," replied John, "but . . ."

"Why, then, do you play the hypocrite?"

"I did not play the hypocrite; I only wished to try to be free from prejudice."

"The deuce! what is the good of being free from prejudice when no one else is, and it does you harm? It would really show more freedom from prejudice to tell Måns your mind than to deceive him."

Måns had already departed, and arrived about the same time at the restaurant as they did. He took part in the meal without betraying a trace of ill-humour. "Your health, Måns, because you

are a man of sense," said the lieutenant to cheer him up.

The habit of speaking out one's inner thoughts without any regard to current opinion, resulted in the overthrow of all traditional verdicts. The terrible confusion of thought in which men live, since freedom of thought has been fettered by compulsory regulations, has made it possible for antiquated views of men and things to continue. Thus, to-day a number of works of art are considered unsurpassable in spite of the great progress made in technique and artistic conception. John considered that if in the nineteenth century he was to give his views on Shakespeare, he was not at all bound to give the opinion of the eighteenth century, but of his own nineteenth, as it had been modified by new points of view. This aroused a great deal of opposition, perhaps because people fear, ~~being~~ regarded as uncultivated a great deal more than they fear being regarded as godless.

Every one attacked Christ, for He was thought to have been overthrown by learned criticism, but they were afraid of attacking Shakespeare. John, however, was not. Thoroughly understanding the works of the poet, whose most important dramas he had read in the original and whose chief commentators he had studied, he criticised the composition and meagre character drawing of *Hamlet*. It is noteworthy that the Swedish Shakespeare-worshipper, Shuck, through an inconsistency due to the current confusion of thought and compulsory cowardice, made just as severe criticisms of *Hamlet*

regarded as a work of art, though he had previously extolled it above the skies. If John had at that time been able to read the book of Professor Shuck, he would not have needed courage in order to subscribe such criticisms as the following : " *Hamlet* is the most unsatisfactory of all . . . the composition is superficial and incoherent. After the action of the play has reached its climax, it suddenly breaks off. *Hamlet* is suddenly sent to England, but this journey does not in any way arouse the spectator's interest. Still worse is the management of the catastrophe. It is a mere chance that *Hamlet*'s revenge is executed at all, and a similar caprice of chance causes his overthrow. His killing *Claudius* just before his own death has more the appearance of revenge for the attempt on his own life, than that of a judgment executed in the name of injured morality."

And then the obscurity which envelops the motives of the principal persons in the play ! " The spectator is left in uncertainty regarding such an important point as *Ophelia*'s and *Hamlet*'s madness. Moreover in *King Lear*, *Edward*'s treachery is so palpable that not the most ordinarily intelligent man could have been deceived by it ! "

If then the drama was defective precisely in the chief elements of a drama, construction and characterisation, how could it be incomparable ? The reverence for what is ancient and celebrated is rooted in the same instinct which creates gods ; and pulling down the ancient has the same effect as attacking the divine. Why else should a sensible

unprejudiced man fly in a rage when he hears some one express a different opinion to his own (or what he thinks his own) about some old classic ? It ought to be a matter of indifference to him. The national and intellectual Pantheon can be as angrily defended by atheists as by monotheists, perhaps more so. People who are otherwise sincere, cringe before a well-established reputation, and John had heard a pietistic clergyman say that Shakespeare was a " pure " writer. In his mouth that was certainly false. A determinist, on the other hand, would not have used the words " pure " or " impure " because they would have been meaningless to him. But the poor Christ-worshipper did not dare to bear a cross for Shakespeare ; he had enough already to bear for his own Master.

Meanwhile John's method of judging old things from the modern point of view seemed to be justified, for it gained him a following. That was the whole secret of what was so little understood later on by theistic and atheistic theologians—his irreverent handling of ancient things and persons ; they thought in their simplicity quite innocently that it was what one calls in children a spirit of contradiction. His aim rather was to bring people's confused ideas into order, and to teach them to apply logically their materialistic point of view. If they were materialists, they should not borrow phrases from Christianity, nor think like idealists. This gave rise to a catchword, which showed how what was ancient was despised—" That is old ! " As new men, they must think new thoughts, and new

thoughts demanded a new phraseology. Anecdotes and old jokes were done away with; stereotyped phrases and borrowed expressions were suppressed. One might be plain-spoken and call things by their right names, but one might not be vulgar; the latest opera was not to be quoted, nor jokes from the newest comic paper repeated. Thereby each became accustomed to produce something from his own stock of original observation and acquired the faculty of judging from a fresh point of view.

John had discovered that men in general were automata. All thought the same; all judged in the same fashion; and the more learned they were, the less independence of mind they displayed. This made him doubt the whole value of book education. The graduates who came from Upsala had, one and all, the same opinions on Rafael and Schiller, though the differences in their characters would have led one to expect a corresponding difference in their judgments. Therefore these men did not think, although they called themselves free-thinkers, but merely talked and were merely parrots.

But John could not perceive that it was not books *qua* books which had turned these learned men into automata. He himself and his unlearned philosophical friends had been aroused to self-consciousness through books. The danger of the university education was that it was derived from inferior books published under sanction of the government, and written by the upper classes in the interest of the upper classes, *i. e.* with the object

of exalting what was old and established, and therefore of hindering further development.

Meanwhile John's scepticism had made him sterile. He had perceived that art had nothing to do with social development, that it was simply a reflection or phenomenon and was more perfect as art the more it confined itself to this function. He still preserved the impulse to re-mould things and it found expression in his painting. His poetic art, on the other hand, went to pieces since it had to express thoughts or serve a purpose.

His failure to have his play accepted had an adverse effect on his pecuniary circumstances. The friends from whom he had borrowed money came one evening to John's rooms in order to hear the play read, but they were so tired after the day's work that, after hearing the first act, they asked him to put off the rest for another occasion. One of the audience who had kept more awake than the others thought that there were too many Biblical quotations in the piece, and that these were not suitable for the stage.

John's resources were dried up, and the spectre of want loomed upon him, unbribeable and stone-deaf. After he had gone without his dinners for a time, he began to feel weary of life, and looked about him for the means of subsistence. How should he get bread in the wilderness? The best means that suggested itself was to seek an engagement in a provincial theatre. There mere nobodies often played leading rôles in tragedies, made themselves a name, and finished by getting an appoint-

ment at the Theatre Royal. He quickly made his resolve, packed his travelling bag, borrowed money for his fare, and went to Göteborg. It was just about the time of the great November storm of 1872.

Since the environment in which he had been living had had a great effect on him, he conceived a great dislike to this town. Gloomy, correct, expensive, proud, reserved it lay, pent in its circle of stone hills, and depressed the lively native of Upper Sweden, accustomed to the rich and smiling landscape of Stockholm. It was a copy of the capital but on a small scale, and John, as one of the upper class, felt alienated from its inhabitants, who were in a lower stage of development. But he noticed that there was something here that was wanting in the capital. When he went down to the harbour he saw ships which were nearly all destined for foreign parts, and large vessels kept up continual communication with the continent. The people and buildings did not look so exclusively Swedish, the papers took more account of the great movements which were going on in the world. What a short way it was from here to Copenhagen, Christiania, London, Hamburg, Havre ! Stockholm should have been situated here in a harbour of the North Sea, whereas it lay in a remote corner of the Baltic. Here was in truth the nucleus of a new centre, and he now understood that that position was no longer occupied by Stockholm, but that Göteborg was about to be the centre of the north. At present, however, this reflection had no comfort for him

since he was only in the insignificant position of an actor.

John sought out the theatre-director and introduced himself as a person who wished to do the theatre a service. The director, however, considered himself very well served by his present staff. But he allowed John to give a trial performance in the rôle in which he wished to make his *début*. This was Dielrichson's *Workman*, the great success of the day. John had discovered a certain likeness between Stephenson's first locomotive and his rejected play; he wished to show how he, like the engineer, had to face the ridicule of the ignorant crowd, the apprehensions of the learned, and the fears of a wasted life on the part of relatives. He gave his trial performance one evening by the light of a candle and between bare walls. Naturally he felt hampered and asked to repeat it in costume. But the director said it was not necessary; he had heard enough. John, in his opinion, possessed talent, but it was undeveloped. He offered him an engagement at twelve hundred kronas yearly, to commence from the first of January. John considered: Should he spend two months idly in Göteborg and then only have a supernumerary's part in a provincial theatre? No! He would not! What remained to be done? Nothing except to borrow money and return home, which he did.

Thus his efforts had again ended in failure. His friends had given him a farewell feast, lent him journey money, done all they could to help him, and now he came back without having settled

anything. Again he had to hear the old too true accusation that he was unstable. To be unstable in an ordered society is the extreme of unpracticality. There persistent and exclusive cultivation of some special branch of industry or knowledge is necessary in order to outstrip competitors. Every orderly member of society feels a certain discomfort when he sees some one wandering from his proper place. This discomfort does not necessarily spring from excessive egotism, but possibly from a feeling of solidarity and solicitude for others. John saw that his countless changes of plan disquieted his friends; he felt ashamed and suffered on account of it, but could not act otherwise.

So he found himself at home, and spent the long evenings in the "Red Room," asking himself whether he really could find no place in a society which for others opened up so many rich possibilities of a career.

At Christmas time John travelled again to Upsala, for he had been invited thither as one of the contributors to a *Literary Calendar* which had just appeared. The *Calendar*, which was received with universal disapprobation, was not without significance as an exponent of the state of literature. The reader who was desired to wade through these elegant extracts, might justifiably ask, "What have I got to do with them?" The poetry they contained, like that of Snoilsky and Björck, might have been written fifty or a hundred years before. It was of indifferent quality, and sometimes even bad,—bad because it gave no sign that the poet

had developed any powers of perception, indifferent because it was not rooted in its own period. The date of the book was 1872, but it contained no echo of the Jubilee of 1865, no hint of 1870, not a whiff of the conflagration of 1871. Had these young versifiers been asleep? Yes, certainly. The great mass of students were realists, sceptics, mockers, as befitted the children of the time, but the poets were credulous fools with the ideals of Snoilsky and Björck in their hearts. Their poetry was that of superannuated idealists in form and thought, for the new views of things had not reached these isolated individualists who still lived the Bohemian life of the Romantics. Their poetry consisted of nothing but echoes. In fact it was a question whether Swedish poetry had hitherto been anything else, or could be anything else. Was Tegner's poetry anything but an echo of Schiller, Oehlenschläger, the Eddas and the old Norse sagas? Was Atterbom anything else than a musical box pieced together out of Tieck, Hoffmann, Wieland, Bürger? And so on with all the Swedish poets. But this Literary Calendar was composed of echoes of echoes and dreams of dreams. Realism, which had already made a premature entry into Sweden with Kraemer's *Diamonds in Coal*, and had subsequently triumphed in Snoilsky, had left no trace on these young poets. The poetry of Snoilsky's school had been the careless expression of a careless time, but these poems simply displayed the incapacity of their writers.

John had contributed to the *Calendar* a free

version of "An Basveig's Saga." In this he had glorified himself as a kind of male Cinderella, or ugly duckling of the family. He was moved to do this by the contempt which had been evinced towards him by his patrons and middle-class friends on account of his failure as an author. The language of the piece was marked by a certain bluntness of expression and an attempt to dignify low things, or at least to rub off the dirt from things which were not really so, but were called so. Since the word Naturalism had not yet come into fashion, his language was called coarse and vulgar.

But an acquaintance which John happened to make during his stay in Upsala was of greater importance than the *Calendar* or Christmas dinner. He lodged with a friend on whose writing-table he found one day a number of the *Svensk Tidskrift* containing a notice of Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. It was an exposition of Hartmann's system by a Finn, A. V. Bolin, and betrayed throughout a half-concealed admiration of it. But the editor, Hans Forssell, had appended to the essay a note written in his usual style when he came across something that his brain could not take in. Hartmann's doctrine was pessimism. Conscious life is suffering because unconscious will is the motive power of evolution and consciousness obstructs this unconscious will. It was the old myth of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It was the kernel of the Buddhistic faith and the chief doctrine of Christianity,—"Vanitas, vanitatum vanitas."

Most of the greatest and conscious minds had

been pessimists, and had seen through and unmasked the illusions of life. Only wild animals, children, and commonplace people could therefore be happy, because they were unconscious of the illusion, or because they held their ears when one wanted to tell them the truth and begged not to be robbed of their illusions.

John found all this quite natural, and had no important objection to make. It was true then, what he had so often dreamt, that everything was nothing ! It was the suspicion of this which had governed his point of view and made all the great and all greatness appear on a reduced scale. This consciousness had lurked obscurely in him, when, as a child, although well-formed, healthy and strong, he wept over an unknown grief, the cause of which he could not find within him or without. That was the secret of his life, that he could not admire anything, could not hold to anything, could not live for anything ; that he was too wide awake to be subject to illusions. Life was a form of suffering which could only be alleviated by removing as many obstacles as possible from the path of one's will ; his own life in particular was so extremely painful because his social and economical position constantly prevented his will from expressing itself.

When he contemplated life and especially the course of history he saw only cycles of errors and mistakes repeating themselves.<sup>1</sup> The men of the

<sup>1</sup> In his pamphlet "The Conscious Will in the World-history" (1903), Strindberg takes the opposite view to that expressed here.

present dreamt of a republic, as Greeks and Romans had done two thousand years before ; the civilisation of the Egyptians had decayed when they perceived its futility ; Asia was wrapped in an eternal sleep after it had been impelled by an unconscious will to conquer the world ; all nations had invented narcotics and intoxicants in order to quench consciousness ; sleep was blessedness and death the greatest happiness. But why not take the last step and commit suicide ? Because the unconscious Will continually enticed men to live through the illusion of hope of a better life. Pessimism, regarded as a view of the world's order, is more consistent than meliorism, which sees in natural development a tendency which makes for men's happiness. This latter view seems to be a disguised relic of belief in divine providence. Can one believe that the mechanical blindly ruling laws of nature have any regard for the development of human society when they produce glacial periods, floods, and volcanic outbreaks ? Must an intelligent man be called "conservative" in a contemptuous sense because he has brought under his yoke and rules the laws of nature as Stuart Mill facetiously expresses it ? Have men devised any certain preventives against shipwreck, strokes of lightning, economic crises, losses of relatives by death and sickness ? Can men control at pleasure the inclination of the earth's axis, and do away with cloud-formation which are likely to injure harvests ? In spite of the present advanced state of science, have men been able to put an end to the grape pest, to stop

floods, eradicate superstitions, remove despots, prevent war? Is it not presumptuous or simple-minded to believe that man, himself governed by chemical, physical, and physiological laws of nature, stands above them because he understands how to use some of them to his own advantage, as birds use the wind for their progress or beavers the pressure of the stream in constructing their dams? Are not the wings of the falcon and the fly more perfect means of locomotion than railways and steamers? How can men be so simple as to think that they stand above nature when they are themselves so subordinate to nature that they cannot will or think freely? It looks like a residue of our primitive illusions. If the present development of European society ends in atheism, that has already been the case with the Buddhists; if in religious freedom, that has already been witnessed in the early history of China; if in polygamy, that already exists among the savages of Australia; if in community of goods, this prevailed among primitive peoples. The fact is that Europe has been the last of all the great ethnical groups to wake to consciousness. It is now in the act of waking and turning itself, not like some oriental nations, to torpid quietism, but to removing as far as possible the pains and unpleasantnesses of earthly existence, although the best way of doing so has not been yet discovered. The mistake of the industrial socialists is that they, according to the formula of the ambiguous evolution theory, wish to build upon existing conditions, which they regard as the product of

necessity, and tending to the good of all. But existing conditions rather tend to the happiness of the few, and are therefore something abnormal to build on, which means erecting a house on ground from which the water has not been drained off. Probably the form of society which they desire, however absurd it is, is a necessary mistake through which men must pass to reach a better. Both the danger and the hope of progress consist in the fact that the socialistic system already has its programme drawn up and consequently works automatically, *i. e.* like a blind, irresistible mass. If it reconstitutes society after the pattern of the working-class who are a minority, and makes all men mechanics, one may venture to doubt, without being regarded as quite mad, whether that will be happiness. Socialism as a social reform is inevitable, for Europe in its self-idolatry has not perceived how far backward it is. Provided with an Asiatic form of government, which interferes in details, supporting ancient superstitions, living under the terrible tyranny of capital, which is maintained by force of arms, it sets on foot political and religious persecutions, it venerates embalmed monarchs like mummies of the Pharaohs, it civilises savages with waste goods and Krupp guns; it forgets that its civilisation came from the east, and was better then than it is now. Hartmann and the pessimists believe that the social reform which is called socialism will come, but that afterwards, it will be succeeded by something else.

The bourgeois is an optimist because he cannot

see or think outside the narrow circle of everyday occurrences. That is his good fortune, but not his merit, for he has no choice in the matter. Nay, he does not even understand what pessimism is, but thinks it means the opinion that this is the worst of all worlds. How could any one have a well-grounded view on that? Voltaire, who was no pessimist, wrote a whole book to demonstrate that this world, at any rate, was not the best of worlds for us, as Leibnitz imagined. It is naturally the best for itself, although not for us, and the difference between the point of view of the hypochondriac and the pessimist consists in the fact that the former believes that the world is the worst possible for him, while the pessimist disregards what it may be for the individual. Hartmann is no hypochondriac as people have tried to make out, and he seeks to alleviate the pain of life as much as possible by placing himself in a state of unconsciousness.

The men of the younger generation of to-day are sad, because they have awoke to consciousness and lost many illusions. But they are not hypochondriacal, and work at bringing the world forward into the last stage of illusion or a new social system, as though hoping thereby to alleviate their pain, and they work the more fanatically, the deeper they feel it.

Meanwhile, supposing that Hartmann's philosophy may be a mistake, and a sceptic must be willing to entertain that possibility, although it has every probability on its side, since the instinct of self-preservation, the first condition of life, consists

in the removal of pain, which is the first motive-power,—we must seek to explain historically how this philosophy has come to the birth and spread. Superficial observers like the mystic Caro, do not hesitate, inconsistently enough, to attribute it to bodily ill-health. The socialists, who wished to arouse the expectation that their teaching was practicable, explained it as the foreboding of overthrow in a class, of whom Hartmann was the representative. But Hartmann believes in socialism and the new social system, although only as transitional forms. He is not despairing, not even melancholy. He seems to be the first philosopher who, quite independently of Christianity, European culture and idealism, tries to explain the world's progress from the purely materialistic point of view. He states facts and processes exactly as they are. From unconscious minerals we have developed into globules of albumen, acquired conscious nerve-centres and finally brains with ever-increasing self-consciousness. The more highly organised the life, the greater the capacity for pain and susceptibility to impressions. Not till our time did the cosmic brain succeed in arriving at clear perception and, accordingly, at divining the order of the world. Hartmann can therefore be regarded as one who arrived at the highest degree of consciousness, and he will be remembered as the great unmasker before whose keen gaze the bandages fell away. It is consequently a mistake to call him "the prophet of despair." Idealists may feel empty and despairing when confronted by the naked truth, but

the meliorist feels an inexpressible calm. Man will be modest when he takes the measure of his littleness as an atom of the cosmic dust. He will no longer build his happiness on a future life, but will be impelled by pessimism to order the only life he has as well as he can for himself and for others. He will see how useless it is to lament over the misery of existence; he will accept pain as a fact, and alleviate it as well as he can. Hartmann is a realist, and the title "pessimist" in its old significance has been fastened on him out of malice. He shudders at the misery of the world, but does not even call it misery. He only shows that life is not so great and beautiful as men like to make out, and pain in his view is not a mere bodily ailment, but an impelling motive. His is a sound and healthy view of things in contrast to which socialism may sometimes look like idealism, since it wishes to remodel society according to its desires, not according to the possibilities of the case.

Meanwhile the review article on Hartmann had a quickening effect on John. There was then a system in the apparent madness of the universe, and his consciousness had rightly foreboded that the whole scheme of things was something very insignificant. But a new philosophic system is not absorbed by a brain in a day. It only left a certain deposit and gave a keynote to his thoughts. As a theoretical point of view it was still obscured by his idealistic education, darkened by his inborn and acquired hatred of the upper class, and his natural tendency to seek his point of equilibrium

somewhere outside himself. Taken on the large scale, life was meaningless, but if one wanted to live, one had to come to grips with reality, and adopt an everyday point of view, which alas ! one very readily did. Enormous difficulties stood in the way of earning a living or making a name. Honour, viewed absolutely, was nothing, but in relation to the petty circumstances of life it was something great, and worth striving for. The Philistines did not understand that, and derived much amusement, when they saw him, pessimist as he was, toiling after distinctions. They, with their clock-work brains, thought this inconsistent, since they did not understand that the term "honour" has two values, an absolute and a "relative."

---

*Richard Clay & Sons, Limited, London and Bungay.*

UNIV. OF MICHIGAN, Google

DEC 30 1964









UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 00536 2267

BC

**DO NOT REMOVE  
OR  
MUTILATE CARD**



PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Digitized by Google

